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Mountain Scenes From the Bible

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OR

"Soul Heights in Scriptural Geography"

By

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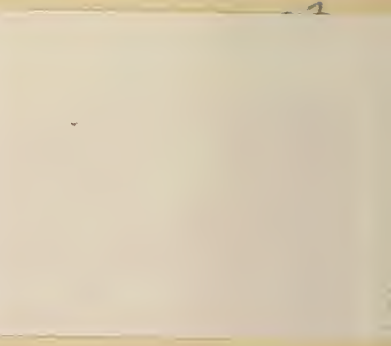

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To
the inner circle of dearest friends
whom God has given me, and
whose friendship
has made for the larger significance of life
this book
is affectionately dedicated

PREFACE

THE essays herewith presented to the public are the accumulation of eight years of thought on a subject dear to a lover of nature. In spiritual travail was born the idea that runs through the whole. Their appeal is to the religious rather than to the curious. No attempt has been made to add to the findings of scholarship. The single aim has been to combine the liberal interpretations of truth with the spiritual, so that the reader may proceed through the experiences of the Christian life with the consent of an enlightened intelligence, and to the spiritual profit of his soul.

The mountainous setting of some of the greatest experiences of God's heroes is not without an interest and charm. The repeated reference to the mountains in Holy Writ cannot be accidental. But the geography of these mountains is of less significance than the spiritual import of what transpired there. It is the experience that gives them meaning. Hence it is "Soul Heights in Scriptural Geography" rather than merely "Mountain Scenes from the Bible" which provides the general caption of this volume.

Of necessity some of the mountain scenes have been omitted. Their study would have been profitable, but they would have added little to the sum total of an over-full treatise. The reader is exhorted to do a bit of mountain

climbing on his own behalf, and to add his contribution to the following as best he may. May God bless this effort to honour His word.

The reader is requested to peruse the following pages in a prayerful spirit. They will lose much unless this is done. The scriptural reference at the beginning of each chapter should be carefully read that the Biblical setting of the scenes may be grasped. Too much should not be read at one sitting. Each chapter is distinct and should be kept so in the thought of the reader. A deliberate, thoughtful and prayerful study of this book cannot fail to be blessed to the spiritual life of him who reads.

W. R. P.

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I

A MOUNTAIN OF BEGINNINGS

Genesis 6-9

THE book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. The mountains of Genesis are the mountains of beginnings. There was a first beginning, but things shortly got rather badly tangled, and had to be done over again. Then there was a new beginning. The first beginning began with creation. The second beginning began with the resting of the ark on Mount Ararat. But the new beginning sent its roots back into the first beginning, for it was through the protection of Noah and his family that the new start became possible.

It is interesting to note how many events in the Bible narrative center in mountain scenery. More than twenty-six episodes of great significance have their setting here. Hence this series of essays. There are occasions when men deliberately set out to climb the mountain. There are others when we imagine ourselves on the mountain height without having had to climb. Again, as in the scene before us, we just happen there. A receding flood leaves us stranded, as it were, upon a mountain crest.

Let us be frank about it. We are here dealing with that period between history and tradition, when events of undoubted occurrence are interpreted and beclouded by the unhistorical thinking of imaginative peoples. They thus reflect a light that is more poetical than scientific,—more spiritual than intellectual. We err when we attempt to subject the writings of the Hebrews to the literary standards of the Anglo-Saxon mind. Truth may even dispense with our peculiar type of thinking, and still

retain its truthfulness. The story of the deluge, together with that of Babel, is illustrative of the way men thought before they were capable of thinking scientifically. Men were then, even as now, lovers of truth and seekers after knowledge. If they adopted interpretations which impress us as more or less mythical, it was not because they were deliberately false, but because their instruments for measuring truth,—discriminating between fact and fancy, —were not as accurate as ours. They could not be left suspended between earth and sky. Experiences demanded explanations. Interrogation points are uncomfortable things. The inquiring mind demanded satisfaction, and in the absence of knowledge poetry came to their assistance. It was thus that *post hoc* became *propter hoc.*

God has ever adapted Himself to the mental and physical limitations of His children. Otherwise there would be little hope for us. Astrology has been outgrown, but the astrologers were honest men, and God spoke to them. So it was in the interpretations of dreams. The world is full of wonder. Life is replete with mystery. God speaks in language His child can understand.

Genesis has too long been treated as a scientific treatise on geology. Its history has been defended as though the foundations of truth were imperilled by honest investigation. As a scientific treatise it leaves much to be desired. As a historical document it is subject to considerable revision. But as a channel through which spiritual truth was conveyed to earlier minds, it is hard to see how it could have been improved. Its object was prophetic, in the sense of speaking forth the mind of God. The moral and religious implications of the deluge are more important to the souls of men than scientifically accurate knowledge as to its areal extent and duration of time. Is the truth embodied of less moment because the account was borrowed and revised from Babylonian folk-lore?

It took the prophetic mind to interpret the religious and moral significance of that which was but a meaningless incident to the ancient Babylonian.

An illustration in point comes from the days of the Civil War. The poem entitled " Sheridan's Ride " was a poetic success, but from the standpoint of fact it contained some inaccuracies. The father of the writer of this paragraph was one of the body-guard which escorted General Sheridan to Piedmont Station, which was just sixteen miles from the scene of the victory Sheridan wrung from defeat. It was Piedmont Station, rather than Winchester, from which the ride was made. It was sixteen miles instead of twenty that Sheridan covered. The battle was that of Cedar Creek, and Captain Polhamus was within speaking distance of the General when his foam-flecked and panting charger came to a stop. Will any intelligent person discount the poem, with its patriotism and moral, because of the inaccuracy as to place and distance? The poem was true, though inaccurate. There is a difference between truth and fact. Truth is spiritual, fact is scientific. Even so must we treat some of these earlier accounts with which we deal.

Whatever the original name of the ancient navigator, and however long a time was spent on the bosom of the flood, and however extensive was the flood, we have in Genesis the Hebrew account of the story. So high a spirituality breathes through it all that we are content to accept it as our authority. From the top of Ararat, where reposes the storm-beaten ark, we look out over the receding waters and the drying earth. We look behind us into the valley which lay before this mountain,—a valley of corruption and destruction. And we look ahead into the future where we see a bow of promise spread across the sky. And as we look we take note of a few things.

1. There Were Giants in Those Days

There have always been giants, since mankind has lived, and it is presumable that there will always be giants. The giant is a fact. His explanation is a theory. And the term is purely relative. Among a puny race any man of normal stature would be a giant. The Michigan lumber jack would be a giant in Japan. We may readily accept all that the Bible tells us about there having been men of unusual stature in olden days. They are by no means unknown to-day. The sophisticated American could astound some of the ancients with a matter-of-fact rehearsal of persons whom he has met, and things he has seen accomplished.

The explanation of the giant in these earlier chapters is somewhat unique. Needless to say, these accounts have been supplanted in more recent days by explanations more scientific. But he required an explanation. What more likely than that celestial beings became enamoured of the daughters of earth and became the progenitors of supermen? In the absence of scientific knowledge we submit that the explanation was good. Men lived in an atmosphere permeated with spirits. Their religion may have had traces of superstition, nevertheless they were religious. Compared with explanations adduced by intelligent people no less than a century ago, the explanation stands high. What more appreciative could be spoken as to the charms of the daughters of men? What more natural could be affirmed of the celestial beings after whose likeness man was created? But the fact remained, THERE WERE GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS.

Truth does not lie in extreme positions. He who ever looks backward for light and inspiration is a reactionary. Growth is retarded. The idea is pagan. The golden age lies in the past in heathen religious thought. But he who only looks forward for inspiration and truth is an im-

practical visionary. Two important things pertain to every fruit-bearing tree. Its roots must be firmly planted in the soil. Its branches must be laden with fruit-bearing seed after its kind. Between the past and the future is the tree, which is not an end but a means to an end.

We are in danger of forgetting the great men of the past. Biography is a most important study for the making of a life. The lives of the saints would be most instructive to the seeker after godliness. The lives of the sages would prove inspirational to the seeker after truth. The lives of patriots would be productive of both loyalty and foresight to the lover of his country. We seriously err when we close our eyes to the past. We are heirs of the ages. We cannot rightly administer our inheritance in ignorance of the channels through which our treasures have come. We are nonplussed at the stupendous demands upon our resources in meeting the crises of the passing hour. A few of far-vision are attempting to provide for the generations unborn. The majority live for the moment, regardless of both yesterday and tomorrow, living little wiser than the beasts that perish. The poet wrote

> "Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime,
> And, departing, leave behind us
> Foot-prints on the sands of time,—
>
> Foot-prints that perchance another,
> Sailing o'er life's stormy main,—
> Some forlorn and shipwrecked brother,—
> Seeing, may take heart again."

It is a mistake for the Christian to continue *ad infinitum* in the proximity of the early beginnings of his faith. Yesterdays will never return. But without a fair knowledge of the early stages, the latter developments will be

meaningless. We smile at the subjects of debate over which men formerly sweat and fought. Yet those men were heroes, and those subjects were vital in the break with heathenism and error. They were men of gigantic mould. The roll is long. The names do not all belong to our camp. There were giants on both sides of each controversy. Fairness recognizes the worth of an opponent. There were as brave men fought on the side of the grey as enlisted under the stars and stripes. There were as honest men who opposed the Reformation as there were who espoused it. No class, and no clan, has ever had a monopoly on bigness. The fair-minded person may not be much of a partisan, but he makes up in truth what he lacks in fanaticism. Only God can properly judge the worth of a man. And he sees a giant where men often see a pigmy, and dwarfs where men think to behold super-men. The olden days were good, but the present is better, while "the best is yet to be." Nor are the giants all dead. The super-man is yet to come. When he comes he will belong to all.

2. When God Changed His Mind

The writer says that when God saw that the imaginations of men's hearts were only evil continually, it repented Him that He had made man on the earth. Frankly, we don't believe it. God is incapable of repentance. If He be God he knows the end from the beginning. He may be grieved, but He cannot be surprised. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God cannot change His mind. He is without shadow cast by turning. To limit the knowledge and provision of God to the exigencies of the passing moment is to deny to God certain qualities which His children possess in part. It is interesting to observe how inconsistently some will argue for

the predictive element in prophecy, and at the same time limit the knowledge of God to present fact.

Creation was not an experiment. Only limited intelligences have recourse to that method. Redemption was not an afterthought. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. The interpretation that throws light on God's dealings with men is but the light passing through the medium of an intellect more or less beclouded and misty. Man has always postulated of God the qualities and characteristics he discovers within himself. It took the incarnation to free God from human limitations in the thoughts of men.

Consequently, the Creator, who endowed man with an animal body, but also with a divine soul, knew to what use man would put his powers in coming to the discovery of himself. The handicap of a propensity to rebellion was allowed from the beginning. The laws were given as aids to character growth. But back of the laws, with their seeming intolerance and rigidity, was a God who was a Father, and who patiently bore with the imperfections of His children struggling to the light of truth. Had a full-fledged revelation of all truth been handed down to these inexperienced creatures, they would not have had capacity to receive it.

What bearing had the deluge on the moral history of the race? Was the earth then more corrupt than it has become since that time? That can hardly be imagined. But, behind the expression, to which we have made an exception, there lies a significant truth. We are always inclined to project into God's plan what we discover in the realm of experience. It is a notable fact that sin blinds the eyes, stops the ears, and makes the heart obdurate. Sin incapacitates for defense against calamity. A generation weakened by indulgence was incapacitated for safeguarding themselves when a misfortune swept

over them. That is one of the damnable things about sin. At best the struggle with nature is a hard one. None can afford to squander his powers of resistance in selfishness and sin. Sin incapacitates. Else it would not be sin.

That the deluge was universal in its sweep need not be maintained. If it happened over the area where as yet the more closely unified race of men were living, it meets every demand that can be made upon it. Traces of a flood are discerned in the early records of all peoples. The story, with pardonable variations, was handed down in tradition as the races scattered and spread over the earth. Its area was limited, but its significance was unlimited in determining the future of humanity.

In the account, as we have it in Genesis, we come to one of the features of primitive religious thinking,—namely, its anthropomorphism. There is here contained an important truth and an undeniable error. The error comes in the necessitated limitation of the divine to the present status of the human. We are constitutionally incapable of thinking above ourselves. At any stage in human history this identification is fatal to all true deity. Man is not in the image of God, but rather the shadow of God. Not until he becomes a son of God does he have the image. The happy balancing of immanence and of transcendence is essential to correct thinking of God. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Yet, lest the distance between finite man and the infinite God be widened too greatly, the incarnation became a divine as well as a human necessity. And the divineness of man, together with the humaneness of God, become comforting and inspiring conceptions of life. Thus it is we say that we cannot think of God as changing His mind. But what God would fain do for human-

ity becomes an impossibility so long as we allow disobedience to nullify the conditions on which blessedness depends.

3. And the Lord Shut Him In

It is said that when the animals had been gathered into the ark, and Noah and his family had taken refuge there, the Lord shut him in. The size of the ark is unimportant. Its structure need not detain us. The discrepant accounts of the number of clean and unclean beasts which Noah took with him into the ark is but a minor detail. The important thing about it all is that it was God who shut the door. It is significant that when Noah had done all that he could do, there was still something needed, and God did that something. God's part would not have been done, and Noah would have perished, together with his family, had he not done his part. But it was God who gave it all the finishing touch.

So it is that the writer of Lamentations writes: "He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out." Now, Noah was not the only one to be shut in of the Lord. The experience of being shut in has been universal. We look upon some life whom we envy, but could we look into the soul we would find that he, too, is tugging at the leash, straining to get away from things which impede his progress and distress his soul. The lesson all must learn is that it is God who shuts us in. And many a restriction proves an ark of safety in the floods that deluge the soul.

We are well acquainted with the shut-in class. Domestic duties, ill health, age, and infirmity, business responsibilities, all serve as walls that seem at times to cramp the soul and stifle the possibilities of life. But the shut-ins are not altogether to be pitied. There are walls of temperament, of mental lack, of formulated habit, of social

restrictions which shut in every soul. No soul knows absolute freedom until he comes to that liberty wherewith Christ makes free. The freedom we crave is irresponsible. To grant it would be to undermine the foundations of society. "Every man shall bear his own burden." A glance is sufficient to reveal the benefits that may come from the shut-in condition.

The trains of a nation go whirling through the land bearing precious lives and priceless treasures from place to place. The power is that of steam. But to be of power that steam is shut in, and allowed only a small egress. Were it allowed absolute liberty it would mean nothing accomplished. Or, to change the figure, a river spreads across the river bed, slowly moving, and indolent. But wheat must be ground to flour that people may live. So, a dam is constructed, and that river is narrowed until it passes through a small sluice. But what it loses in breadth it gains in power, and the wheel is turned, and the meal is ground, and people eat and live because the river was shut in. Once again, a nation is at war. Homes must be defended, lives spared, a nation's honor preserved. Huge missiles must be fired to retard the approach of the enemy. Hence powder is shut in a metal case, and the projectile's flight depends upon its power, and the power depends upon its compactness.

There is a law that operates in life. The loss of one faculty but serves to quicken the rest. A soul is shut in through blindness, but the hearing is more acute. Deafness closes in upon the soul, but the eyes become more bright. God shuts us in that He may ultimately lead us out. Even the loss incurred through breaking the commandments of God has been used to liberate the redeemed soul in paths of larger service.

"I walked through the woodland meadows
Where sweet the thrushes sing,
And found on a bed of mosses
A bird with a broken wing.
I healed its wing, and each morning
It sang its old refrain.
But the bird with the broken pinion
Never soared so high again.

I found a young life broken
By sin's seductive art,
And touched with a Christ-like pity
I took it to my heart.
He lived with a nobler purpose,
And struggled not in vain,
But the life that sin had stricken
Never soared so high again.

But the bird with a broken pinion
Kept another from the snare;
And the life that sin had stricken
Saved another from despair.
Each loss has its own compensation.
There is cure for every pain.
But the bird with the broken pinion
Never soars so high again."

4. The Bow in the Clouds

The providence of God comes not so much in the creation of new provisions to meet human need, as it does in the giving of a new meaning to old provisions so that they meet that need. The work of creation was quite complete. God left nothing out. And when things got badly messed, it but needed the divine hand to unravel the tangle. The elements were all there from the first. So it was in the rainbow in the cloud. There had been rainbows since the first ray of light pierced the first drop of rain. Rainbows had long antedated the race. When there was as yet no human eye to behold the beauty, the divine eye had contemplated this bit of creation and called it very good. But now it has a new meaning. Before it was but a physical wonder. Now it

became an omen of hope. Henceforth, as long as time should last, men were to know that God's mercy endureth forever. No devastating flood will again destroy the face of the earth. It is but the first note of a jubilant song,—"In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

There is a prophecy in a rainbow. No matter how fierce the tempest, the light shining through spreads God's glory across the sky. Things do get dark at times. Storms burst and threaten to engulf the soul. It looks as though the end of all hope had come. But the light breaks through, and the bow appears in the cloud. "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined his ear unto me." It takes the showers to make the rainbow, and when we see the latter we instinctively say: "It is worth it." It is the brighter day ahead that gives meaning to life. With a gracious God there is always a brighter day ahead. The old may need to be torn down, but God never leaves the debris to clutter the ground. The new is better. By hope we are saved. Subtract this faith from the heart and pessimism alone is left, and pessimism is but a longer way of spelling death.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud!" Every cloud! Any cloud! Any storm is sufficient, for God's light always shines. The cloud of sin, of failure, of death, of heart-ache, of catastrophe,—all are included. We have not a miniature God. No human calamity can truly thwart Him.

"Earth hath no sorrow
That heaven cannot cure."

II

A MOUNTAIN OF SACRIFICE

Genesis 22:1-8

SCHOLARS have shown how great has been the influence of natural environment in the development of racial character. Equally evident has been the influence of nature in the production of the world's great men. It was no accident that David became the man he was, with so much of his life spent out under the open sky. It was there he came to know God and to grow a great soul. What could not be said of the influence of God's out of doors in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and even of the Master himself? With few exceptions the heroes of the Bible were lovers of nature. The separation of religion from nature is nothing short of a calamity.

Especially have the mountains had a marvelous effect upon great souls. It would almost seem that it takes a mountain or two to create a mountain man. At least there is often a strange affinity between them. Witness the father of the faithful climbing the mountain to sacrifice his son at the behest of conscience! Witness Moses seeking oft the inspiring and revealing summits of the mountains of God! Elijah hies hither to hear the still small voice. And the Peerless One goes yonder to pray. To shallow souls the mountains are but piles of rock and dirt, but to the man of character they are an inspiration and a revelation from God.

A mountain is more than a corrugation on the earth's surface. Let the geologist account for it as he may, the mystic knows that it is an expression of the thought of

God. The heavens may declare His glory, and the firmament show forth His handiwork. But the mountains reveal the soul of God more nearly than any material aspect of creation. If the undevout astronomer is mad, no less so is the sceptical dweller among the hills.

I invite your company on an excursion into "A Mountain of Sacrifice." It is located in that region of the celestial country through which all heavenly pilgrims must pass, and is described in the first section of the "Baedeker of the Soul,"—the book of Genesis. But before we make the journey let us review the experience of another who climbed this mountain so many centuries ago. We are led back to the tent of a sheik, pitched in the plain, where an aged man and his wife lived alone, except as surrounded by servants. The story of their life is tragic. The loneliness of their hearts as they yearned for a son was but intensified as the years of early hope lengthened into decades of despair. Wealth, friends, relatives, servants,—none could take the place which ached for a son. Impatience at the long delay had precipitated that unfortunate affair with Hagar, but that chapter is closed. And then the promise of a son is fulfilled, and Isaac is born. And the happy years followed in mad haste until Isaac stood a young man in his prime, the pillar and hope of his aged parents. We wonder how it came about, but one day a command was laid on the heart of Abraham, and he heard words which all but crushed him to the earth. "Take now thy son, thine only son, even Isaac whom thou lovest, and offer him upon one of the mountains which I will show thee." And in obedience to the call we read of the careful preparation and the weary march up the mountain side, father and son, with servants and beast, and then only father and son together. There is a pathos in the repetition, "they went both of them together."

Have we thought deeply of its meaning to Abraham? Possibly the following lines may bring it more vividly before us:

Abraham's Meditation

"Can I give thee up, my son Isaac, my child,
Thou offspring of promise, my staff in old age?
Would God I had died or ever this day come!
Many years had I waited thy coming, my child.
I thought that the Lord had forgotten his promise,—
The days were so weary, the nights were so long!
When Ishmael came to brighten my dwelling
My heart did rejoice. But alas! he was not
Accepted of God. Forty years had I trusted
Before thou didst come,—and at length when I held thee
A babe in my arms, surely thought I at last
That my cup of rejoicing was filled to o'erflowing,
And I gave thanks to God for that His word was true.

Can I give thee up, Isaac? How much rather would I
Lay down my own life than harm thy dear head!
Was it for this I reared thee and gave of my being
That thou a prince among men might appear?
How I watched every act, and hearkened with pleasure
Half mingled with sorrow to hear thee call "father!"
No sweeter word e'er reached mine ear, and thou didst look
With wonder and ask if unwitting thou hadst hurt
When first thou didst see the tears coursing down.
'Twas hurting of gladness. Ah, precious hurting!
And as childhood gave way to boyhood and manhood
I watched thee with pride, my son of old age,
And wondered was ever a father so blessed?

Can I give thee up, Isaac? Oh why doth Jehovah
Require this of me, as though thou were naught,
Would it not serve him better that thou shouldst continue
To live and to conquer in battle for him?
Surely death cannot praise him, and none but the heathen
God Moloch could ask such an offering, I thought.
And yet God has asked it. Shall I be rebellious
And bid him defiance, to flee with my son?
Ah, no! for I could not withdraw from his presence.
Were he man I could mock him, but naught can I do
Than to heed his commanding. But why, Oh God, why
Can I not with a sheep or a bullock appease thee?
Dost thou ask that my child should atone for my sin?

O God, this is cruel. Thou art trying me sorely,—
For faithful I've been to thy service, and e'en
When thy promise was slow in its coming I trusted
Nor doubted thy power to do as thou saidst.

Can I give thee up, Isaac? Yet the Lord hath required it.
I know not his purpose, yet it cannot be evil.
He gave thee to me and His gift I surrender
To Him again. I'll be true to my conscience,
But reason doth waver, and passion doth tempt me.
But deep in my bosom a voice bids me obey Him.
I must yield thee again, O my son, my beloved!
Perhaps,—but I must not a false hope awaken.
'Tis He who hath given thee, and to Him thou returnest.
His name, be it blessed in heaven and earth.
We must go. I must yield thee. I trust in His mercy.
Farewell joy and comfort! The Lord's will be done."

We recall the happy outcome of Abraham's surrender, but the point that must not be forgotten is that Abraham made the surrender, not knowing what the outcome would be. God had a purpose in calling Abraham to the mountain. The stern and rugged grandeur put strength into his soul and nerved him for his heroic task. And now, with Abraham, we have arrived at the Mountain of Sacrifice, where we, too, must learn certain lessons.

It is of surpassing interest to locate the topography of the mountain of sacrifice. According to Samaritan tradition, it was none other than Mount Gerizim. The Jewish tradition, however, identifies it with one of the hills of Jerusalem, and indeed that upon which in a later day the temple stood. How fitting such an association would be! The mind leaps back to the voluntary exile of the father of the faithful as forth from home and kindred he fares to follow the leading of his Lord into a land he knows not. The years of wandering have brought him into the vicinity of those hills which are forever after to be touched with a divine glory as Jehovah makes there His presence known. The scene of Abraham's struggle and victory becomes the place where centuries afterward

the Holy of Holies stands. The spot of Isaac's sacrifice becomes the point in the compass to which captive Israel turns its longing eyes, and where for centuries other lambs are substituted for the sacrifice of human lives. It was not far from this scene that another sacrifice was made in the fullness of times, and the "lamb that taketh away the sin of the world" gave himself up in our behalf. It is profitable to remind ourselves that as Mount Moriah became the temple mount in the Holy City, so in the spiritual Jerusalem the mountain of sacrifice is the mount of the temple of God.

1. The Mountain of Sacrifice is the Mountain of God

Please consult your Baedeker again, and let us see if there is not something which we have missed. We observe that Abraham lived in an environment in which human sacrifice was a familiar institution. The appeal of this gory rite to Israel of a later day is familiar to every student of the Bible. It was an every-day spectacle to Abraham, as with his purer faith he looked upon the superstitions of his neighbours. We may well imagine that in time the doubt assailed him as to the nature of his allegiance to his God. Did his neighbours love their offspring less than he loved Isaac? At any rate they did not hesitate to offer them up in sacrifice to their gods. Or was it that they loved and feared their gods more than Abraham revered God? Thus the question must have burned itself into his conscience until God called him to make the sacrifice. God tested Abraham, not for His own, but for Abraham's sake.

It is well to note the place of sacrifice in general, as well as that of Abraham in particular. Notwithstanding the free-and-easy religionists who would have a bloodless, and hence a lifeless religion, sacrifice is a universal condition of life and progress. It is synonymous with

motherhood and patriotism. It is the essence of life and love. The pruning of the tree, the dying of the grain, the restraints of self-discipline, are all made necessary in the development and growth of life. Progress is marked by footsteps stained with blood. God Himself submitted to the ordeal, and Calvary stands out pre-eminent among the sacrifices of history.

It is well to point out that every life that would attain to life's true meaning must climb the mountain of sacrifice, and when this mountain is climbed, not in the spirit of rebellion, but of obedient sacrifice, the mountain of sacrifice becomes the mountain of God. The thing that must be sacrificed is that which comes between the soul and its God. Isaac as a gift from God was a blessing, but when he became an idol God demanded his surrender. God has said: "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me,—for I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God," which is but another way of saying that God's love will not tolerate anything that interferes with our best.

The mountain of sacrifice is the mountain of God. Many fail to find God because they have never come to the mountain of sacrifice, or having come to it have refused to climb to its summit. No man has climbed that mountain without coming closer to God. If God is ever to be found it is at the top of this mountain. Much unprofitable speculation arose during the war as to whether the soldier who died on the battle-field was saved regardless of his creed. The answer none can give. But if it was in these soldier hearts to know God when they met Him, they found Him in the fiery ordeal.

So let us not fear the mountain of sacrifice. In our limited vision and understanding we would fain remove sacrifice from life and religion. But the cocoon that is opened without sacrifice and struggle leaves a moth that cannot fly. A race of flabby souls and pulpy spirits is

being produced among the sons of men, hardly worthy of a heroic ancestry, because the iron of character which comes only through sacrifice is given no opportunity to harden. It is on the mountain of sacrifice God develops granite characters of which to build His temple.

2. When Two Equals Three

There is something unique about God's arithmetic. Where men count two, God counts three. There is always the presence of the Unseen One when two are together in His name.

How lonely those two men appear as they climb the rugged mountain side bent on their distressful mission! Poor Abraham! His face has aged ten years in the past five days. His shoulders are more stooped, and the furrows in his brow are deeper. His hair is whiter,—it has turned as in a night. Food has been tasteless, and life without appeal. And Isaac, young and strong, rugged, vigorous and handsome,—the pride of his father's heart, —tramps in bewildermint at his side. There is an interrogation in his eye which finally bursts from his lips. "Father, here is knife and wood and fire, but where is the lamb?" Youth likes to understand things, dislikes to take things for granted, and wants to know WHY? And his question is unanswered, as "they went both of them together." Can't you hear their footsteps, as silently, in a very tragedy of agony and bewilderment they climb up, up, up, both of them together?

We have said that at the top of the mountain of sacrifice God is to be found. But how did He get there? Does He live there? Visions of the eternal cross float before our eyes. There is a deep truth here. But can we not find Him before we get there? We may not find Him until we have been there, but He is with us long before. Look closely, brave heart, and you will see not two climbing that mountain, but three. They had to get

to the top before they found Him, but He was with them all of the way. So it was with Elijah who must run away into the desert and mountain, a forty days' journey, just to learn that God had been with him all of the time. And the Master went into the mountain to commune with him whose presence was unbroken in his life.

Would to God that some word of mine might help some soul climbing the mountain of sacrifice. Are you climbing such a mountain to-day? Does God seem very far away? Remember that God was never nearer to you nor will ever be than while you climb this mountain. Remember that He, too, has climbed this mountain oft before. Remember that others, too, have climbed it. No life that has ever amounted to much has missed it. The hair may whiten in contemplation of the cost, but a glory divine with a radiance of heaven comes to the face that climbs to the very top. It is this which makes for "the fellowship of his sufferings" and we know the joy of singing:

> "Where he leads me I will follow,
> I'll go with him, with him all the way."

God doesn't try every soul as he tried Abraham. He cannot risk some of them in the fire. And then, too, clay will not take the edge of steel. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," *i. e.*, He purifieth.

3. *"In the Mount of the Lord It Shall Be Provided"*

And now we have reached the mountain top. Our Isaac has been bound and placed on the altar. Our hand is stretched back to complete the sacrifice, when we, too, hear the voice of God saying:

> "The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken heart; a broken and a contrite spirit, O Lord, thou wilt not despise."

And that which we have surrendered to Him is forever safe in His keeping. We never truly possess aught until

it has been placed in His hands. The possessions God gives us in our complete surrender are possessions eternity itself cannot take from us. Abraham never truly possessed Isaac until he had made the surrender. And this is the lesson we must learn. Each of us must place our all, our silver and gold, our friends and loved ones, our lives and ambitions, our hopes and opportunities, all as our Isaac on the altar and leave them with Him. Allow the repetition, WE MUST LEAVE THEM WITH HIM. He must be all and in all. What He then gives belongs to Him and to us in joint ownership and partnership. A new chapter is to be written on "The Stewardship of Friends." Here we have the heart of stewardship. And who that is of a right mind wants a friend or possession upon which the smile of God cannot rest?

"My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Will you please likewise observe that Mount Moriah had its name changed? Henceforth it is called "Jehovah-jireh," which means "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (or "provided"). And as Abraham looked around he saw a ram caught by the horns in a thicket, and the ram became a substitute for Isaac. It is useless to ask how it got there. Whether it had wandered from some shepherd's tender care and had become fast, or whether it was some mountain sheep in temporary difficulty, who shall say? Let the naturalist answer if he can. The providential fact was that when in his inmost soul Abraham knew that his love for God was supreme and Isaac need not be slain, the lost sheep was there ready for the sacrifice of substitution and thanksgiving.

Will you follow me in saying that no man has climbed to the top of the mountain of sacrifice without finding

there the substitution for all of permanent worth in the sacrifice? At least the substitution was there whether or not it discovered itself to him. All that is of God in the offering is retained. I may not literally sacrifice my friends and dear ones, but I find the substitution in Romans:

"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Yes, human sacrifice is of God. It has marked the religions of heathenism, and it marks our holy faith as well. But when in the face of all of life's relationships and entanglements I substitute the sacrifice of my life in service for theirs, the mal-adjustments of life have a way of working out, misunderstandings are clarified, and the order of God prevails.

Dear heart, you are climbing the mountain of sacrifice. You will see visions at the top that will fill your soul with glory. Shrink not to go every step of the way. Climb, for God is with you. Take your time if you must but climb. Let the words of a former generation be your song:

"I'll be of the few
Who dare to go through;
I'm on the upward way."

There are those who will not climb, and who rebel at God's command. These will go down deeper and deeper into the valley, and their vision will grow dim and obscure, and their spirits will become dwarfed and bitter. God pity the soul that refuses to go with Him all the way.

4. The Path By Which Blessings Come.

"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not

withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

If this be true,—and who can doubt it?—it is easy to discover wherein so many lives fail of being blessed and of being a blessing. We cannot bless unless we be blessed, and we cannot be blessed if we fail God. Here is the source of our spiritual sterility. Here is the reason so much religious activity is abortive. We refuse to pay the price. Our churches lose out because of the absence of the heroic note. Ease, sloth, and general indifference explain why the nations of the earth are not blessed in us. We say "safety first" rather than "Seek ye first the kingdom." We are afraid of the pruning. We are afraid of the altar. We are afraid to say "Yes" to God, and we lose the rarer atmosphere of the mountain top. We lose the joy of life through conquest and struggle. And we lose the vision,—the big, broad vision of the world, and of eternity. But the worst of it is, we lose God out of our lives. A formal religion takes the place of a vital faith. We refrain from social problems and evils lest our fingers be soiled. No one can become a real blessing to the world until he has known where the mountain of sacrifice is, and has climbed it.

A word of cheer from a novice at mountain climbing. Not long since the writer went into the hills of New England, to get a bit of the bigness of God into his soul. Problems were pressing, and burdens exceeded his strength. Through his soul went ringing the words:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.
From whence shall my help come?
My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth."

Into the heart of the White Mountains he wended his way, and on a crisp autumn morning made to the top of Mount Kearsarge. It is not a high hill,—but three miles from base to summit,—but it was a symbolic act. The hills were covered with the glory of turning leaves. He kissed the dew-dripping leaves of crimson and gold, and thanked God. A decisive issue had to be settled. The climbing was heavy for untried muscles. Again and again a boulder served as an altar at which to bow and wrestle with God. But as the ascent was stubbornly made, in this act sacramental, the words formed on his lips:

> "I'll go every step of the way.
> I'll be of the few, who dare to go through;
> I'll walk in the narrow way."

What matters it what the sacrifice must be? It is the climbing and the giving that enlarges life and aids the vision. There is a something worth while that comes as the fruit of climbing the mountain of sacrifice, and one feels the stirring within that tells him that he is akin to that which is eternal. It pays in its own right. It pays.

From his heart this message to you. You, too, whoever you are, are climbing a mountain of sacrifice. Ambition, desires, the yearnings of heart and flesh must here be presented a living sacrifice. Keep going to the very top. It is hard and the way is rough. But others have climbed before you. Every life that has proved victorious had this mountain to climb. You will often be weary and exhausted before you reach the summit. But keep going. It will repay you. Your brow will be bathed in sweat, but keep going. Your temples may whiten in a night. Your face may become scarred and your shoulders bent. But climb on. God is up there. There is the mountain of God. He is with you as you

climb, but you will lose Him if you do not climb. He will withhold from you nothing of eternal worth, and you will doubly possess whatever is worth while. Your return from the mountain top will be triumphant. Your soul will be bigger and stronger, washed with tears, and with eyes that can discern the eternal.

"The Saviour climbed a mountain height,
And it was night!
The Saviour there spent hours in prayer
For strength divine his cross to bear,
Ere it was light.

My Saviour bids me climb with him,
Though sight be dim,
My Saviour gives me strength to go,
And bid farewell to all below
And climb with him.

And there from mountain height I see
Eternity!
And from the height I clamber down
To bear my cross in vale and town,
God's man to be."

III

A MOUNTAIN OF FIRE

Exodus 3:1-6

OUR excursion to-day is into the range of mountains known in olden times as Horeb or Sinai, which lies in the land of Midian. Various names are now attached to this mountain range, such as Gebel Hammam, Gebel-el-Banat, etc. Many important events transpired in the midst of this mountainous country. It was here that later the law was given to Moses. It was here the rock was struck from which the waters gushed to revive famishing Israel. And it is here the study of to-day is staged.

We have named it "A Mountain of Fire," not that there is anything volcanic or infernal about it. Quite the contrary. But it is the mountain of the burning bush, which burned but was not consumed. Whatever the earlier association may have been with primitive fire worship, Israel early recognized fire as a symbol of God. The shekineh was the witness of His presence. And whatever may have been the nature of the mystery which Moses held, he instinctively and intuitively associated the vision of the burning bush with the proximity of the Divine Person.

Referring again to our spiritual Baedeker, we derive some information that casts a great light on the situation. Israel had long been enslaved under the rod of the Pharaohs. Our imaginations catch the mingled wail and moan of the people of God languishing under the whip of the taskmaster. In God's good time God's man is born. Domestic strategy provides for his upbringing in the

courts of Pharaoh. The dawning sense of racial sympathy and religious responsibility finds expression in the smiting of the Egyptian, and Moses flees for safety to Midian. For forty years an apprenticeship is served as he feeds the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. In the performance of this humble task he leads his flock around the back side of the mountain of God, even Horeb, and the spectacle of the burning bush bursts upon him. Thus, with Moses, we have come to the mountain of fire.

Stop and contemplate this man Moses. Surely a hero of God, a mountain man among men. Michael Angelo's Moses will give us a great artist's great conception of a great man. He stands out unique in the history of God's people, easily overtowering all successors until we come to him of whom it was foretold that he would be "like unto Moses." Mountain men naturally fit into mountain scenery, and on several crises of his life we find him in the heart of the mountains.

At the outset we are confronted with a problem in natural history. What was the nature of the burning bush? What is there upon which we can lay our hand that will aid in its interpretation? The revelation itself, and all that it involved,—was it objective or subjective? Did Moses see a burning bush with his natural eye, or was it with his prophetic eye? What constitutes revelation after all unless it be the inner opening of the mind to see the divine in the commonplace? Perhaps we will never know the actual details of this scene, but whatever they were, it is certain that all of the formulating ideas of more than forty years were here crystallized into conviction, determination and action, and, that accomplished, our interpretation of the means whereby this result was achieved is of little significance.

From this mountain of fire let us ourselves look with

prophetic eye that the revelations of God may find us receptive. And the first thing that challenges our attention is

1. *The Fact of a Perennial Theophany*

Mistaken piety has often tried to separate nature from the supernatural. The interpretations of religion have been quite as unnatural as supernatural. Such a distinction is as little to the point as that would be which divides a life into water-tight compartments having little interdependence. Can one locate the seat of the soul? Is it in the nervous system? Is it in the affections? Is it in the intellect? Or, is it in the blood? Yet the clearest fact of our consciousness is that the soul lives. No part of our being is unrelated to it. Likewise, where does the supernatural dwell? Is it over nature? Is it in nature? Or is it a purely natural expression of nature providing for her own development? Is God unnatural? Is He supernatural? Or is He the very heart of nature? At any rate the devout student of life sees glimpses of God everywhere and in everything. The spiritually minded discerns the things of the Spirit in all creation. It is surely an orthox commentary on the mountain of fire when we read from the pen of Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

> "Earth is crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush aflame with God;
> But only he who sees takes off his shoes."

In these days of autumnal glory the question arises, "What was it that Moses saw?" Could it have been a bush touched into flame by the hand of the great magic Artist who has oft gladdened our hearts in the glory of turning leaves? Whatever his eye beheld, his soul caught fire with a flame that burned but did not consume him. He got close to God. He saw that this world was God's

world, and that injustice and oppression were out of harmony with God's sovereignty. And there was born in him a holy purpose with divine help to right some of these stupendous wrongs. His soul was fully awake. He got the inspiration for a big task. He saw "Him who is invisible."

Religious misconceptions die hard. Undoubtedly to some it is little less than sacrilegious to make God so natural as this suggestion would do. We become weary of the common things of nature. The ordinary becomes a species of slavery. We long for the imaginary, the mysterious, the unreal. Sunsets and sunrises, mountains and leaves and flowers, purling brooks and stormy clouds belong to the world of weariness and hum-drum. The soul would spread its wings and soar to a spirit world, a world of supernatural things, of mystic experiences and of magic powers. Something as different as can be from things as we know them!

Such longing is doomed to disappointment. The pure in heart see God in the commonplace. The soul that walks with God finds companionship sweet in the ordinary things. The converted soul lives in a new heaven and a new earth. Mountains and hills break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands. It does little honour to the Creator to belittle the work of His hands and to sigh for ethereal realms whose features and boundaries are largely the product of perfervid imagination. It was Lowell who so exquisitely expressed the divine immanence thus:

"O Power, more near my life than life itself
(Or what seems life to us in sense immured),
Even as the roots, shut in the darksome earth,
Share in the tree tops joyance, and conceive
Of sunshine and wide air and winged things
By sympathy of nature, so do I
Have evidence of Thee so far above,

Yet in and of me! Rather Thou the root
Invisibly sustaining, hid in light,
Not darkness, or in darkness made by us,
If sometimes, I must hear good men debate
Of other witness of Thyself than Thou,
As if there needed any help of ours
To nurse Thy flickering life, that else must cease,
Blown out, as 'twere a candle, by men's breath.
My soul shall not be taken in their snare,
To change her inward surety for their doubt
Muffled from sight in formal robes of proof:
While she can only feel herself through Thee,
I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear,
Seeing, to know Thee not, hoodwinked with dreams
Of signs and wonders, while unnoticed, Thou,
Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,
Missed in the commonplace of miracle."

Dear friend, may we venture the assertion that unless we learn to see God in the things about us here we have little assurance that we shall be able to see Him anywhere and at any time?

2. *Geography of the Holy Land*

The position being taken, which we have assumed, it stands to reason that all ground is holy ground. Let us revert to the case of Moses. Here we find him an alien in a foreign land. Forty years' residence has not separated him from his people and from their religious hope. How far advanced his religious development has proved is open to question. But it would be but natural that to Moses " God's country " was hardly the place of his exile. All that " back to God's country " has meant to the homesick exile through the years, it undoubtedly meant to Moses. His God was where his people dwelt. His sacred spot was where the Abrahamic hope and promise were cherished in the bosoms of his race. He had a lesson to learn which is possibly still in order for us. Something within him responded to the vision without, and he

hears a voice,—yea, how oft have we heard it when treading in the presence of heroism, devotion, love and death, —"Take off the shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground."

It is an error to think of some ground as holy, and other ground as unholy. Where is the Holy Land? No land under the sky is holier than America. We speak of the cemetery as "God's acre," but unless we have missed the whole stewardship message we have discovered ere this that every acre of every farm, every park, every desert and plain belongs to God. We set aside certain ground as holy ground, for the erection of a church maybe, but all ground is holy where men meet God.

> "Where e'er they seek Thee, Thou art found,
> And every place is hallowed ground."

In like manner Israel thought of Hebrew as the language of heaven, even as the Roman Church teaches that Latin is the only tongue holy enough for Christian worship. But Pentecost dispelled all that. It is not the country, the land, the tongue or the day that is exceptionally holy. It is the presence of the divine that makes all sacred.

Thus we need to relearn the lesson taught so long ago by Brother Lawrence. "Practicing the presence of God!" We strongly suspect that this was the discovery that Moses made out on the sides of Horeb. It must come to every soul that would make a success of life and religion. We are orphans in our Father's house until the revelation comes. It is the part of superstition to differentiate between places and things as holy or unholy. It is Christian to see the sanctity of all, and the possibility of approach to God through all.

From this it is but an additional step to note

3. *A Bugle Call With Many Notes*

If all ground is holy ground every calling is a sacred calling. Please observe that the word "calling" is used, not "profession." There must be the inner call, the divine urge to make a man fit his task. Then, and not till then, does it become a sacred calling,—sacred to the best and truest that is in him, sacred to the best welfare of his fellows, and sacred to the God who gave him being.

Moses shepherding the sheep was as called of God as was Moses leading Israel toward the land of promise. The one but anticipated the other. God was putting him through an apprenticeship that would be sorely needed by the impulsive Moses in the trying times to come. After all the later problem was but the former task magnified. He must have looked, even as the Master did in a later day, with compassion on the multitude as sheep having no shepherd. If Israel after years of establishment could be thus compared by the Christ, how much more the disorganized mob with which Moses had to deal?

So much depends upon the mental attitude. The viewpoint determines the sanctity or the unsanctity of a task. All is sacred to a holy mind, all is worldly to a worldly mind. True, there are dangers to avoid. Lest the sacred things be dragged to the level of the profane, let the secular be elevated to the plane of the holy. It is the story of Hiram Goff over again. His pastor had called on the humble cobbler, and commiserated him upon his lowly task. But the child of God, in the dignity of a profound conception of the sacredness of all life and duty, brushed the whittles from his lap, and, straightening up, replied: "I am Hiram Goff,—a shoemaker by the grace of God." And Stradivarius would be hard put to it to make a finer contribution to the serious thinking of men.

One of the great evils in religious life and within religious circles is the separation of the calling of the ministry from the other callings of life. The minister is forced into an unnatural and often impossible position. He is separated from the rest of humanity by artificial barriers, and these he must break down if he would be a man accepted among his fellows. Has it occurred to us that God's heroes were not priests, but laymen? Aaron and Ezekiel are only exceptions which prove the rule. Who was Moses? A shepherd and a layman. Who was David? A shepherd, a soldier, a musician, a monarch, but withal a layman. Who was Isaiah? A poet, a statesman, but a layman. Who was Jesus? Our great high-priest, but withal a carpenter and a layman. Who were Paul and John, Peter and Luke, Matthew and Mark but laymen? Where lay the power of the Wycliffian movement if not in the "lollards" or lay preachers? Where lay the success of Wesley if not with enthused and devoted laymen? The development of the priesthood may be a necessity, but it is not an unmixed blessing. The church is not the priesthood, but the laity. Here the life must be produced which is to quicken the world. The hope of the world lies in the pew as truly as in the pulpit. And when we hear the bugle call with many notes that is the forward call in Christ's name to the whole army of God.

4. *The Day of the Underdog*

"The mills of the gods grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small."

It is a proverb little short of universal acceptance that "every dog has his day," however the day of the underdog has been tardy in making its appearance. Nevertheless that day is dawning, and its possibilities who can foretell?

For several centuries the cries of the people of God had ascended to the ears of Heaven. We do not mean that the cries and prayers were always intelligently uttered or directed. We do mean that where there is oppression there is groaning, and though that groaning be incoherent and misdirected there is an ear that hears and a heart that understands. God is the God of the oppressed.

It is worth while to note that Christ is the poor man's Christ. From birth to death he was identified with the proletariat. Born of humble parents, his advent heralded to humble shepherds, lying in a borrowed manger, growing to manhood as an humble toiler, companioning with artisans and fishermen, at home with publicans and sinners, there was little that pertained to life that he did not see and understand. With no place to lay his head, for years a homeless wanderer, he sought his final resting place in a tomb borrowed for the occasion. Through the centuries he has continued to be the poor man's Christ.

So God's ears have ever been open to the cries of poverty and need. God heard the long-drawn-out wail of Israel, and Moses was His answer. So, too, for decades multiplied into centuries the cries of black folk went up to God from this land, and Lincoln was His answer. The cries of outraged Belgium and France went up to God, and Foch was His answer. Always in the fullness of time God sends His man to lead His people to the land of promise. Nor need we fear that the cries of Korea and of Armenia will go long unheard. We need not question whether God will hear the complaints of working girls, packing-house employees, steel workers, coal miners, and textile workers. There may be angry snarls among the cries. God will not heed them. There may be cries that have little cause. God cannot be mocked. But ultimately, and at a time possibly sooner than many

of us realize, God will respond to the cry for justice and a square deal. We know not who His man may be. He will not make haste, but when He has given His answer that answer will be complete. Wealth and power cannot hope to dodge the day of the Lord. There is a righteous God in the heavens, and His rule is for the benefit of earth's humble ones.

It is not amiss, in these days of strikes and labor unions, to remind ourselves, as some one has said, that the exodus was but the strike of the brickmakers' union, and that Moses was a labor leader who had the intelligence to organize the industrial movement into a religious movement. Israel's lessons were not learned in a day. The disciplining God gave her was at times severe. But God was on the job. Neither capital or labor can hope to escape the searching, sifting process of the justice of God. The day of His wrath against wrong on either side is inevitable. There is but one refuge from His wrath, and that is submission to His righteous rule of love.

Let us stand, then, with bared and bowed head, in the presence of the mountain of fire. Let us remove the shoes from our feet for the ground is holy. From this point of view we grasp the perennial theophany, and the geography of the Holy Land; we hear the bugle call of many notes, and catch a vision of the day of the Lord. Shall we be obedient to the heavenly vision? Then the day will hasten when men can reverently say:

> "God's in His heaven;
> All's right with the world."

IV

A MOUNTAIN OF VICTORY

Exodus 17:8-12

WE have made excursions to the mountains of sacrifice and of fire. To-day we ascend a hill with three notable worthies of God that we may learn the secrets of victory. And while the hill is, as it were, but one of the foothills of the mountain range, still it belongs to mountainous scenery and provides a viewpoint from which to look at life in the large.

It is something of a far reach from the mountain of fire to the mountain of victory. We do not know how long an interim lay between the two scenes. But the time element is of little value in determining the issues of eternity. Whole centuries pass with little of definite contribution to the life of the world, only to give way to decades fraught with most momentous issues and laden with priceless bequests to the world.

Nevertheless, let us pass in rapid review the points of interest that mark the valley that lies between these two mountains. Moses had descended from the mountain of fire, and after much difficulty had succeeded in leading Israel out of Egypt and well on the way toward the land of promise. With turmoil without and trepidation within, Moses had assumed the place of leadership over this vast unorganized mob. And then, no sooner were they free from the armies of Egypt than they were beset by the natives through whose country they had to pass. Israel is frightened because disorganized and untrained in the art of war. Moses is driven to desperation and frequent consultation with God. With the attack of the Amele-

kites upon the unprotected flank of Israel, we are brought to the mountain of victory. But it is a mountain of victory by anticipation before it becomes one in reality.

In the interpretation of this episode much depends upon our manner of approach. The critic may find much at which to scoff. The credulous person may deduct unwarrantable conclusions. Our approach must be both rational and sympathetic if we would learn the lessons here involved. And let us admit that the victory was a victory in the souls of the fighters before it became a victory over the forces of Amelek. There is something uniquely psychological in the whole affair. Even at that early date men understood the importance of maintaining the morale of an army. Let us not look at the affair as something unreal and unnatural, but as an ancient account of an affair that savours richly of modern ideas. Moses on the mountain of victory was as truly a factor in winning victory as was Foch kneeling at the altars in France.

1. *Alone in the Crowd*

It is only the superficial mind that identifies numbers with company. The loneliest place in America is not some western prairie, but the streets of New York, Chicago, or Washington. The leader of a great movement, harassed by thousands seeking personal contact, may be the loneliest man in the world. We have often thought of the loneliness of Jesus, notwithstanding the fact that the multitudes pressed upon him until he had no leisure so much as to eat. So it was with Moses,—alone in the midst of the mob. Obtaining his strength from sources with which they were unfamiliar, misunderstood by those of his own flesh and blood, misinterpreted by those whom he sought to help,—who was there able to appreciate the soul of the man? Possibly the greatest tragedy

the world has witnessed might be named "the loneliness of greatness" as illustrated by great leaders from Moses to Lincoln. We have sometimes wondered if Woodrow Wilson could not add a chapter to such an account.

Might it not be well for us to understand a few facts that are too often forgotten when we deal with the leaders of men? There is a sense in which leadership means separation. The leader is necessarily somewhat removed in thought and vision from those who are led. The responsibilities of leadership are overwhelming. The people demand a god or a demi-god, and the leader for the moment becomes an incarnation. No place can be more lonely than upon a pedestal. All of the time the leader is such by virtue of the larger vision, the more challenging personality, the more urgency of his demand. Destinies, physical and spiritual, hang upon his leadership. Interests the most intimate and widespread depend upon his wisdom. His successes are but temporary. His failures bid fair to be lasting.

But the leader is still human. If the people forget this he is placed in an impossible position. If he forgets it his downfall is speedy and certain. As a human being he is sociably inclined. He likes people or he could not lead them. The social instinct must be strong or he will repel rather than attract. Immediately a thousand pitfalls yawn at his feet. The religious leader treads frequently on thin ice. Nothing but the grace of God can keep him. With whom shall he commune and share the secrets of his soul? Familiarity breeds contempt. A wall of reserve must be erected if his leadership is to stand the vicissitudes of time. With an overwhelming responsibility resting on him, but with channels of social intercourse somewhat choked, he is a lonely figure. The demons within make the battle doubly hard. Dangers without beset him at most unexpected places. Let no

man aspire to the office of leader of men except he goes hand in hand with the God of Moses.

A word of general application may not be amiss. We elect a man to office, thus indicating our confidence in him. But too often we withdraw and allow him to fight his battles alone. It is little wonder that so many have failed to meet the expectations of those who elected them. We elevate a man to the episcopacy only to feel that he is henceforth so separated from the rest of us as no longer to need our prayers and expressions of confidence. From our ranks we send out our youth as pastors of churches. Upon them the often unnatural obligations of the ministry fall. They are bone of our bone, yet are placed under a strain many cannot endure. Spiritual suicide and moral failure can often be traced to the fact that they have been left alone.

Brethren, beloved, in the name of the lonely Christ let us remember that no man, be he Moses or Elijah or Paul, liveth or dieth to himself. If Moses needed Aaron and Hur, if Christ longed for the fellowship of his disciples in the garden, if Paul felt the need of asking the prayers of his converts, let us not think that our modern leaders are more independent or less needy. A bit of prayer, an expression of confidence, will do much to ease the load. A friendly hand and a cordial smile will do much to see the leader through to victory.

2. *Who Won the War?*

Just now we are not concerned about the division of honours from the recent conflict. England, Italy, France and America may not be wholly agreed as to the real victors. But our concern is with the battle with Amelek. Moses on the hill top, and Joshua in charge of the fighting forces,—who won that war? The militarist will answer for Joshua, and the ecclesiastic will award the

honour to Moses. Which is right? The answer is evident. Moses on the hill top was as necessary to the victory as was Joshua in the plain. Nor could all the efforts of Moses have availed had Joshua been derelict in his part of the program.

It would seem that the clock of history keeps time only as the pendulum oscillates between extremes. A past age dwelt much on the theory of religion. Its contemplation was centered in abstract questions which dwelt much on the bargain counter ethics in the matter of atonement, discussed the origin of evil, and undertook to outline the creeds by which alone one might become a citizen of the kingdom. There were giants in those days. But a practical age has brushed theory aside. Creeds are relegated with other impedimenta to the scrap heap. Action, service, and the delivery of the goods,—these are the items which mark present religious and ethical life. Nor is either position necessarily wrong. We have possibly spent too much time with Joshua on the field of battle, just as a former age spent too much time with Moses on the hill top. But there must be a return to the mountain of victory if victory is to be permanent on the field.

Let us turn our attention toward the ministry of the church in the drama of modern life. Here we refer less to the individual minister than to the church in its public ministry. It is a bit discouraging to note how disproportionate are the rewards allotted the comedian, the manufacturer, the baseball player, and the movie star, as compared to the support given the school and the church. There is something fundamentally top-heavy about such a scheme of things. Let labour have its reward, and let skill possess the emolument of merits. But let us not forget that the life of humanity in its upward struggle depends less on the material than upon the spiritual side of life. The schoolhouse and the church are the con-

servers of those ideals by which men live the real life. We neglect Moses on the hill top to the peril of Joshua in the plain.

Is not the present unrest and moral upheaval a warning? Are not the Amelekites gaining ground in the life of our youth? Are our homes safe from attack? Is the thinking and reading of the day free from their taint? We are not pessimistic. But we assert that unless we look oftener to the hill top and give encouragement to the leaders who are there the later chapters of civilization will be more full of agony and tragedy than any we are reading to-day. Let there be a return to God and to religion. Regardless of who occupies the sacred desk, let the kingdom be upheld rather than held up. By determined effort let emphasis be unceasingly laid on the spiritual ideals of life. If the church has been impractical in her theology in the past that is no reason for the suicide of society to-day. Nothing will ultimately avail but confusion and disaster unless we recognize the important part played by Moses on the hill top.

"O man of God, hold up thy rod!
The tide of battle vacillates.
The fields are gory with our blood,
The air befouled with human hates.
Let not the warrior fall in vain!
Uphold thy rod in spite of pain!

O Church of God, your ideals raise!
The murk of sin bedims our eyes,
Infernal powers by devious ways
Add to youth's awful sacrifice.
Amid the din of battle cry
Uphold the standard lest we die!

O Christ of God, thy Cross revive!
A bloodless faith is weak and pale.
'Tis in thy Cross alone we live,
Naught else for conquest can prevail!
The Cross, the Cross our standard be,
And then a crown of life with thee."

3. The Man or the Rod

The margin that separates religion from superstition is often very narrow. The same faculties are often brought into play. It is their exercise and direction that differentiates the one from the other. At a later time Moses fashioned a brazen serpent whose benefits were enjoyed by all who had been bitten by serpents. But this brazen serpent later became an idol and had to be broken down. Men called it "Nehushtan." In apostolic times the shadow of Peter was accredited healing power, but the power was not in the shadow but in the faith which the man drew out. In the story before us we have the same issue. Was it the rod that divided the waters, or was it the man who wielded the rod? Was it the rod held aloft that turned the tide of battle, or was there something personal and human,—something defying analysis but working by subtle means,—whereby the faith of the man on the hill was conveyed to the soldiers in the plain? Was it Elisha's rod or Elisha himself who had the power to restore the child to his mother?

We have here to do with a very pretty question. The use of material means toward spiritual ends cannot be denied. As long as we are in the flesh we will be subject to impressions made by material forms. It is useless to argue for worship irrespective of form or place. We require the peculiar form of church architecture with its multiform variety. We require sacred diction, holy ceremonies, and material altars. None can reasonably question the place of these in the religious development of the people of God. That the crucifix itself has played an important part and has a legitimate place in the life of religion it would be hard to disprove. Peculiar vestments are in order. Moses can use the rod, whether to divide the sea, bring the plagues, bring forth water out of the rock, or turn the tide of battle.

The mistake enters when the sign eclipses the thing signified. When ecclesiastical architecture eclipses communion with God, when ceremonial raises barriers between children of the same Father, when the crucifix dislodges the living Christ, we have to deal with idolatry. When confidence is placed in Moses' rod rather than in Moses' God we have the superstition of heathenism to contend with. One likes to think of men of the caliber of Moses who could use the means without endangering the end. Phillips Brooks could don the surplice and men forgot the surplice and Brooks and thought of God. Cardinal Mercier could wear the red cap, and officiate at all the offices of his station, but men saw deeper and discovered a patriot, a hero, and a man of God. There alone is the danger. It takes big men to bear the rod of Moses without the danger of an idolatrous following.

There is cause for asking whether our Protestantism has not been a bit too hasty in dispensing with the rod of Moses. One may assert that we are not feeding our people on the chaff of untruth and superstitious idolatry, but the complementary truth is that too often nothing is given to take its place. We have dispensed largely with form and ceremonial, but much of nominal Protestantism is " without form and void." We have placed the sermon and the preacher at the center, instead of Christ and the cross. We have not the ear of the masses. We have been too prone to define man as a thinking individual, whereas there are too many who do not think. They just sit. We have lost the psychological approach to a great part of the human family. Here and there is a strong church, strongly manned and growing stronger. But that Romanism has the approach to the masses, while Protestantism makes its appeal to the classes, would be difficult to deny. The spirit of worship is too often a stranger to our order of service. Would not a more wor-

shipful and judicious use of Moses' rod prove of profit in bringing men into more intimate touch with God?

4. Wanted! An Aaron and a Hur

Look with me again to the hill top. Hitherto our attention has been centered on one outstanding personality, standing with majestic dignity, with hand upraised, and in that hand a rod. And while the arm with rod in hand is uplifted the army of Israel prevails. But look you! Human nature can stand only so much. Those arms are becoming heavy, the body is weary. The sun beating down robs that figure of his strength and vigour. The arms begin to lower, and human strength can hold out no more. But look to the plain! Reverses are befalling Israel. Amelek is winning. Israel is being pressed back. Heroes fall. Young men are slain. Panic reigns in the camp of Israel. Women's shrieks are added to the din of battle. With marvellous determination the man on the hill top becomes again a man of iron. The rod is uplifted. Israel sees it and gains confidence. The tide of battle is turned, and now Amelek is hard pressed and crowded to defeat. But again as the weary hours pass the man on the hill top gives way almost imperceptibly to his weariness, and again the tide of battle turns against Israel. What is to be done? Must Israel suffer defeat because of the physical impossibility of one man to hold aloft the rod? That must never be. And so Moses' two companions recognize that there is something that they can do. First of all they look to his comfort. A stone is brought upon which the wearied body may rest. Then Aaron on one side and Hur on the other hold up, not one hand alone, but both hands, until the going down of the sun, and the day is saved for Israel.

It is true that the need of the hour is for leaders. Never has the need been greater in church and state.

But there is ground for suspicion that the reason there are not more of the type of Moses is because there are so few of the type of Aaron and Hur. A loyal Aaron and a faithful Hur would save many a president, or governor, or mayor,—many a bishop and pastor from defeat. And too often the reluctance of potential Aarons and Hurs has a purely personal basis. But it is always the armies of Israel that suffer, and not alone the hapless leader. There is such a thing as loyalty to a leader, not because of his personality, but because of the lives and interests that are in his hands. Could the Church of Jesus Christ forget petty interests and personalities there is little that could not be accomplished in his name.

In the final reckoning it will be found that not only are the honours of victory divided between the men on the hill top and those on the plane, but the Aarons and Hurs come in for their share of honour with Moses. The keynote of all kingdom activities is co-operation. Do you find it difficult to work with another? Is adaptation almost impossible with you? In the name of him who pleased not himself find some Moses whose arms you can support while the heat of battle is on. And incidentally prayer is the best method of helping. I may not persuade God, but my prayers help to create an atmosphere in which victory is increasingly possible.

We have tarried long enough on the mountain of victory. Before we descend to the commonplace things of life let us remind ourselves that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

V

A MOUNTAIN OF LAW

Exodus 19-20

WE are now several months removed from the mountain of victory. The lesser hills and mountains recede in the presence of the stern grandeur of the mountain of law. There it stands in all its ruggedness! To the casual observer it seems but a cold, cruel and formidable mountain whose heights are scarcely appealing in their condemnatory challenge to the climber. But upon closer inspection we observe that the granite of this mountain is the most durable, and such as to provide a firm foundation for civilization in all future years. The stern appearance of the mountain but covers for a moment the real beauty of flowers and shrubs that bedeck its sides. For know that the mountain of law is our old friend, the mountain of fire, from a different approach. Law is but another name for love, and in the "do's" and "don'ts" of the law we see but the danger signals set to guard the unwary traveler of the pitfalls at his feet.

Hitherto we have had some occasion to inspect more closely some of the age-old interpretations of these ancient revelations. We have seen nature aflame with God in the mountain of fire, and have seen psychology working in the mountain of victory. Does the account of the handing down of the law require some revision? The writer of Exodus tells us not only that the decalogue was written by the finger of God on the tablets of stone, but that all the rest of the law as contained in the following thirteen chapters was included. Here is a point which

most of us have overlooked. Another misconception has obtained as to the relative antiquity of these laws in human civilization. The impression has been received that they came *de novo* to Moses, and that their appearance dates only from his time. But the archeologist has disproved that. Excavators have unearthed a deal of information which goes to show that these laws were known, at least in germ, centuries before Moses was born. Their lineal descent from the code of Hammurapi is quite apparent. It is true that they breathe a purer atmosphere, but the relationship between the two codes cannot be doubted.

Then, too, the modern age desires greater proof that these laws were really written with the finger of God on the tables of stone. Are we not dealing with poetic expression? The anthropomorphism of the Bible is everywhere seen. God walks in the garden in the cool of the day, like a man who is weary with the heat. God comes down to see what the tower builders are doing at Babel. The angels of God marry the daughters of men, and become the progenitors of giants. God reveals His back parts to Moses in the cleft of the rock. Would not the ancient writer smile to see us insist upon a literal interpretation of his poetic expression?

So in regard to the writing on the tables of stone. Other stone tablets have been found with various inscriptions upon them, coming from the hand of man. Laws, histories, and other items of ancient interest were thus put in more permanent form. May we not be pardoned for venturing this suggestion? The laws were from God, whether known first to Moses or to many generations before him. They were put in permanent form, inscribed on stone, to be the legal code of a new state. Can we doubt the divine authorship, even though the hand was that of a human stone cutter? Do we question the source

of the authority of the Bible because it came through human channels?

How, then, are we to account for the mountain of law? Moses is a man who has pierced the veil that hides God from the eyes of men. Like Enoch, he walked with God. The commission was divine which sent him out to liberate Israel. Through outward means the indwelling Deity became more evident to him, and all his powers, his knowledge acquired through other years, was at the divine disposal. His position in the royal family had enabled him to acquaint himself with the laws of civilization. Egypt's laws were of a high order. With these he was familiar. And now he is leading this vast horde of migrants to a new land. They need organization, training, discipline and government. Laws are a necessity for human social order. There, alone in the mountain whither he had fled for quiet and meditation from the confusion of the crowd, Moses prayerfully prepares the code of laws that is to govern Israel, and puts it in permanent form. It was the work of God as truly as the Bible is the word of God. And the marvel of it is that so little of the law needs revising to be applied to the modern world.

With this introduction let us examine some of the characteristics of this mountain of law.

1. A Cross-section of the Law

It is a lamentable though probably unavoidable fact that the nature of law is misunderstood. Some think of it in terms of arbitrary will on the part of some Power who is able to compel others to do his bidding. It is most unfortunate that this conception so largely prevails as to the law of God. The old question bobs up: "Is a thing right because God commands it? Or does God command it because it is right? Is right independent of

God? Then God is no longer God. Are God's commandments but the *ipse dixit* of His will? Or are they conditions fundamental to our well-being?" These are but a few questions which show how greatly we are in need of information.

Perhaps we come nearest to a proper understanding of the nature of law when we see it as but another name for order,—the order in which things stand in relation to other things by virtue of their nature and use, and among men it is the order in which men stand in relation to their fellows. We must beware lest we think of this order as passive. Law is an insistent urge making its presence felt among things and men. It is but another way of speaking of the divine immanence. It is a divine order, a divine urge, a divine relating of thing to thing and of man to man. Its sweep is as universal as being. From the tiniest molecule to the greatest sun its reign is universal. Some of the laws of God have come to us through intuition. Some have come by way of experience. Some have not yet been discovered. Others have been revealed. And the universal reign of law, affecting the amoeba and the electron no less than the whale and the planet, is but another expression of the all-pervading and universally sovereign God of love,—for love is but another name for right order and right relation.

Now it is of little moment what were the channels through which the laws of God as related to society came to Moses. They were imperfectly conceived yet wonderfully adapted to human need. But whatever their channels the source is indisputable. Men of eager eye and attentive ear have ever been seeing the invisible and hearing angel voices. No nation or race, no age or clime, has a monopoly on divine truth. And God is still seeking to reveal himself in better organization, more help-

ful relations, and greater development in human life and thought. We dare not stand too close to the canvas lest we lose the painting in the paint. We dare not stand too close to events and experiences, for our senses must give way to sense, the immediate sensing of the experience must be digested by that mental faculty we call sense, which is but another word for setting things in their right order and relations. And thus it is that the law of God grows on us. And a law discovered by Confucius is as divine as a law discovered by Moses if it sets in right order the things of personal and social life.

Thus we see that the social and moral laws are by no means the whole of the law of God, but they are vitally related to the laws that govern the stars and the seasons. From a negative standpoint they are but red flags which warn of danger. From the positive they are part and parcel of God's universal sovereignty, but bearing on the social and spiritual side of life. That there is often an apparent clashing between the laws relating to the higher and lower phases of life is seen in the conflict of the instinctive law of propagation with the higher laws of self-abnegation in the interest of social welfare and moral uplift. But here again the conflict is but seeming, and relates to our ignorance of the will of God. Will enters as umpire that settles the dispute, and a holy will finds no conflict. We may choose between Paul and Browning. Paul wrote from personal experience "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." But Browning strikes a higher note when he says:

> "Let us not always say,
> 'Spite of this flesh, to-day,
> I strove, made rise, gained ground upon the whole.'
> As the bird wings and sings
> Let us say 'All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul.'"

We vote for Browning as a prophet of the redeemed life.

2. Breaking the Unbreakable

We come now to the consideration of a most common delusion. The laws of God are inviolable. God will not break them for He cannot deny Himself. Man cannot break them because they are divinely unbreakable. Yet the common mind thinks often of the laws of God as subject to breakage,—like a piece of fragile china. The commands of God are considered as restrictions which hamper liberty. Away with them! Like Samson bursting the withes that bound him, so the lover of liberty will break the laws of God! Forthwith he proceeds to break —himself! A foolish ram indignantly protests that a mountain has no right to obstruct his path. He may do one of two things,—either go around it or go over it. In either case he obeys law. But he determines to break the mountain. Head on he batters away at the granite rock. Does he break the law? He breaks himself on the law. Indeed it is difficult to imagine such folly in a brute, yet this is the folly of man who thinks to defy the eternal laws of God.

The question of miracle comes before us in this connection. Let us examine it a bit closely. We have said that laws cannot be broken. Let us recognize the fact that they can be combined in their operations so as to produce peculiar results. Gravitation defies opposition. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put Humpty Dumpty together again when he defies gravitation. But bring into play the laws of aerial navigation, and a whole crate of eggs may be carried a hundred miles, not in defiance of gravitation but in accordance with it. The larger mastery of knowledge pertaining to the laws of God will make possible combinations of laws

unheard of to date, and produce results which a former age would call miraculous. But to the devout mind that has come to see God and walk with Him all is miraculous. The morning dew that glistens from the petal of a rose is no less a miracle than the turning of the water into wine. The babe fresh from eternity is no less a miracle than one raised from the dead.

Obedience to law is liberty. Obedience to the laws of his being enables the eagle to soar away into the distance of heaven. Obedience to law enables the fish to swim. Obedience to law enables the tree to grow, and the flowers to bloom. Obedience to law makes possible human development and the growth of society. Law, law everywhere, in all, under all, around all, through all,—law which is but another name for God. To him who is acquiescent comes the truth.

> "The eternal God is thy refuge,
> And underneath are the everlasting arms."
>
> "He shall cover thee with his pinions,
> And under his wings shalt thou trust."

But to the rebellious comes the ultimate discovery that "the stars in their courses" fight against him.

In this light let us look at the matter of acceptance of the Christ as a means of individual and social salvation. To some it may seem an arbitrary demand that one believe in Christ if he would have eternal life. But let us remove all that savours of superstition from our thinking. Let us dismiss all the accumulations of nineteen centuries of theology. And let us see in Christ the law of God speaking to the inner conscience, and exemplified before men. He could say, with no show of egotism: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work." The marvel and secret of that peerless life was its absolute devotion to the Father's will. It

is not the acceptance of a creed, nor of a theory, but in the adoption of the spirit of obedience to law that the perfect harmony of Christ with God and His universe becomes a possibility to the sons of men.

3. The Acid Test of Law

Hitherto we have been speaking of divine law in its universal application. Unfortunately we are not confined to the exercise of divine law. Human law, both in church and state, is quite insistent on obtaining recognition. The distinction between laws human and divine is more or less vague to the unthinking. Nevertheless much hinges on the distinction. The state has often called those criminals who were in fact the most law-abiding of men. Witness the early Christians under persecution. The church has often branded as heretic the most orthodox of believers. Witness the Reformation. History is replete with illustrations in which this distinction is shown, nor can we seriously question the insufficiency of present laws to heal the breach. Not until injustice is wiped off the statutes, and courts now often partial administer justice will their identification be complete.

One note prevails in all divine law, and that is life. An entire new world opens up at the mere suggestion. Every commandment, every restriction, every urge aims at life, more abundant and larger life, fuller expression of completer life. And divine law must provide the standard by which human laws are to be judged. The laws of the state break down when they fail to administer in the largest way to the largest life. The laws of the church are but idle mockeries unless they bear directly upon the entire life of humanity. This is the acid test. But we must beware lest we give a false interpretation to life. The fool sees in the challenge of life the occasion for libertinism and debauchery. He is mistaking the

ways of death. The legal automaton pronounces his own doom when law looms larger than life. The ecclesiastic confesses himself a bigot and an enemy to both God and man when creed or ritual or theology become the issue, and he loses sight of life.

By this standard let us judge of the laws governing immigration, industry, commerce, and the home. By this standard let the negro question be determined. Let this standard govern the Christian's conduct. By this standard let religious and denominational claims be judged. Any other standard means the exaltation of the thing above the man. The Master's own standard was "that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." There is no other orthodox criterion of belief or action. Had the heresy hunter known and acknowledged this standard the history of the church would not be so blood-stained and hate-envenomed.

Unfortunately there are those who are incapable of determining wisely for themselves. Regardless of physical development and the accumulation of years they remain in the realm of mental immaturity. For these the rod is still necessary. Life must conform to a stereotyped pattern, uniform and de-individualized. This is a magnificent way to undo the work of the Creator, and lose the man, reducing him to a thing, a mere cog in the wheel of a great machine. Let those aspire to this who wish, but awakened souls catch a glimpse of greater things. They breathe the snow-washed atmosphere with the glow of adventure. They see visions and become seers, painters, composers, and poets. They hear the voice of angels and catch the golden gleam of celestial portals. These are they who make contributions to the world's life and thought that outvalues the wealth of Croesus.

4. The Despair and the Hope of the World

There is a sad awakening for the average man. He discovers that there is discord within his soul when he glimpses the Christ. He learns that in a world of order and obedience he alone is an anarchist. This awakening is theologically known as "conviction of sin." He attributes the antagonism to his appetites, but it resides rather in his soul. Whatever theories may be advanced in explanation of this phenomenon the fact remains. Original sin is. And though it be repeated a million times in other lives it is original with each sinner,—it originates in him. He looks into the mirror of the law and the reflection he beholds is by no means flattering.

Jesus Christ is the despair of the world. His unattainable perfectness is the outstanding fact of history and of human consciousness. The world's most heroic and unselfish service pales into sickly hue in the presence of the Peerless One. He is the world's despair because He turns the searchlight of truth into the region of the thought life and there discovers to saint and pharisee the germ of murder, theft, and every foul crime. In the presence of his truth and holiness we hang our crimson faces and cry: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. Paul said much about a righteousness by faith in Christ, about Christ being the end of the law into righteousness to every one that believeth, about men becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus. To what extent has this ideal become a reality in Christian experience? If salvation means anything it is implied in character,—the transformation of a lawless soul into one whose very breath and nature is obedience to the law of God, which will say with the holy man of old: "My soul followeth hard after thee, O

God." Salvation is not what is done for the soul except as it is done in the soul.

A famous violinist went to Stradivarius and asked him to make for him an instrument surpassing all other violins. In the course of time the task was finished and the musician sent for in haste. He drew the bow across the strings, but his smile of expectancy faded to disappointment. There was not the melodious richness for which his ear hungered. Again, and once again, he drew the bow across the strings, then dashed the violin to the floor, breaking it in pieces. He paid the price and left the maker of violins with the wreck of his masterpiece. But Stradivarius gathered up the broken pieces with a tenderness of a parent. Piece by piece was cemented together with meticulous care. And then in due time he sent again to the musician with the news that he had now an instrument he knew would meet his need. In doubt, the musician came, and placing the violin beneath his chin drew with skeptical hand the bow across the strings. Instantly there sprang from the depths of that instrument a note of richness, as of a soul that had probed to the depths and had found God, and a new light came to the player's eye, and he forgot himself and his surroundings as he lost himself in the playing. At last he asked: "Where did you get this wonderful instrument?" to which the violin maker replied: "It is your own,—the one you broke in your disappointment. I have made it over again."

Which thing is an allegory. The hope of the world is He who not only created man, but who, after sin and the world and the flesh have broken man, is able to make us new creatures in Him. A redeemed soul is an instrument placed in the hands of the Great Musician upon which he can play the melodies the angels sing, but of

which the sons of earth can never dream. Jesus is the hope of the world, for he is the character giver.

Just here is where we need to do a bit of sober and patient thinking. Too often we expect a full-fledged character to spring Minerva-like, all panoplied from the head of Zeus. But character does not come that way. The ideals of youth are the blue-prints of character, but the house remains to be built. And the task is hard. A shanty may be built in a day, but it took centuries to build Westminster Abbey. There are bitter fights, and the hours of forlorn hope bid fair to be long. There are weights to carry, and problems to face. Relationships must be adjusted and the larger meanings of life must be grasped, until toward the end of his task the builder sees only too clearly how far short he has come from realizing the pattern that was shown him in the mount. And any man must fail of attaining any dream that is worth-while. The worth-whileness of the dream lies in the fact that however far we reach it is just beyond our grasp. But, oh, what a growth comes in the reaching! While there is no time to waste, yet a whole life is well spent if it but approximate "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

What is the relation of the Christian to the law of Moses? Christ is the answer. The laws in their divine essence are written with the finger of God upon the heart. They become the unconscious source of an outward expression which is obedient to the will of God. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love never faileth. We have a right to "expect to be made perfect in love in this life."

Let us descend from the mountain of law with this new appreciation. Law is but another way of spelling Love, and love is the definition of God. Having once climbed its forbidding height, let us never more fear its summit. The mountain of law is the mountain of the

burning bush approached from another angle. We were not afraid there, neither let us be afraid here. This law that pervades all creation is but the Immanent God with all nature tenderly borne in arms of love. The mountain of law is the mountain of love,—not soft and yielding, but solid, permanent, unchangeable through the ages. As William Herbert Carruth writes:

"A fire mist and a planet—
A crystal and a cell,—
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell:
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod,
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.

A haze on the fair horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich tint of the cornfields,
And the wild geese sailing high,—
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the golden-rod,
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it God.

Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in,—
Come from the mystic ocean,
Whose rim no foot has trod,—
Some of us call it Longing,
And others call it God.

A picket frozen on duty,—
A mother starved for her brood,—
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood;
And millions who, humble and nameless,
The straight, hard pathway plod—
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it God."

VI

A MOUNTAIN OF GLORY

Exodus 33:7-34:9

BUT recently we descended from the mountain of law, but to ascend the same mountain to-day under a different name, and from a different angle. If we have been wisely attentive we have discovered ere this that the significance of a thing depends less upon the thing itself than upon the viewpoint from which it is seen. Mount Sinai was physically the same when Moses ascended it as a mountain of law as it was when he first knew it as a mountain of fire. But Moses was not the same. And now, when Jehovah bids him climb its heights as a mountain of glory its very appearance seems changed. The subjective change in Moses created a different world. The redeemed soul lives in a new earth. The creation of a new heaven and a new earth will be psychic rather than material.

If we read between the lines we will discover that Moses was entering upon a new phase of his religious life. An enlarged experience lay before him. He was making a discovery that has been the cap sheaf in the lives of all God's saints. Will it be misunderstood if we intimate that Moses on the mountain of glory receives "the second blessing?" Hitherto he had been an obedient servant, henceforth he is the friend of God. His feet tread on higher ground. A new note sounds in his pronouncements. In our later discussion we will show what this note is.

From this mountain of glory, which we have climbed in spirit with Moses, let us "view the landscape o'er,"

and note some of the outstanding features of the surrounding country.

1. *The Gospel According to Exodus*

There is one feature peculiar to all this mountain scenery. We never get out of sight of the Gospel. Like the scarlet thread in the rope of the British navy, this thread runs through all Holy Writ. In whichever direction we journey, and from whatever mountain height we gaze, Mount Calvary is to be seen.

We have been wont to speak of the four gospels of the New Testament. There is a gospel of the Old Testament as well. Isaiah has a distinct gospel in Chapters 1, 53, and 55. Genesis has a gospel all its own in the account of grace which provided coats of skins with which to cover the nakedness of guilt. So Exodus has a gospel which is revealed in the scriptural setting of our mountain climb. Let us note briefly what happened to Moses and what came of it.

The law-inscribed tables of stone were but completed when, on his descent from the mountain Moses heard the sound of revelry in the camp. Hurrying to the scene, he beheld the golden calf erected amid a worshipping and delirious crowd. In anger he hurled the stone tables to the ground, in a sense breaking the very laws he would have others obey. The grinding of the golden calf to dust and sprinkling it upon the water which he compelled the people to drink was but a matter of time. Then that awful slaughter wherein three thousand Israelites were slain!

Ah, Moses, Moses, that temper will yet be your undoing! Have you not yet learned the lesson taught by killing the Egyptian, and the angry smiting of the rock? Is that show of wrath a reflection of God? You plead righteous indignation, but God has a revelation to make

to you that will indeed be a revelation. It is true that heroic measures are sometimes needed, but are you sure that this was the occasion? These people are comparatively fresh from idolatry. The worship of the bull Apis has been before their eyes since they can remember. They are but children. It is difficult for them to worship an invisible God. Moses, you should have known better! You must again ascend this mountain and restore the work which you have destroyed, and there is a higher religious experience for you to have.

The hunger of Moses' honest, if sorely tried and impulsive, heart reveals itself in the yearning cry, "Show me now thy glory!" Mountain man that he is, the task is still too great for him. Perhaps God has intended that he shall come to this sense of utter helplessness and dependence upon Him. Dissatisfaction with his religious experience and with his uncontrolled temper lies back of that cry. And God is as patient with Moses as He is with Israel, and as He would have Moses be with Israel. So a place is picked out on the rocky sides of the mountain, and God places him in a cleft of the rock and passes before him. Hitherto Moses has known Him as a God of law and duty, of earthquake, fire and nature. Now he comes to know Him in a different way.

Here we have the Gospel according to Exodus. As the Lord passes before him, Moses hears words which have a new meaning:

"Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth; keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation."

What a rebuke to Moses! It is true, the gospel does not shine so bright and undimmed as when it falls from the lips of the Master. But the conception of God as

merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, is as a ray of bright light at the early dawn. Is it any wonder that Moses made haste and bowed his head and worshipped? Then it was that the glory for which Moses had prayed was revealed, and God showed His back parts to Moses, for none could look upon His face and live. May not this expression be but an awkward yet poetic way of saying that God revealed Himself to Moses even as He would do at a later time in the glory of the incarnation? Never again would Mount Sinai appear so stern and forbidding as it must have seemed to this honest man before. There is a new note in the law which he transmits in its revised form. Much attention is forthwith given to the erection of a tabernacle in which God's presence may be brought nearer to the people. Moses has discovered, and forthwith proceeds to reveal, the God of Jesus Christ.

2. Moses, a Spokesman For the Race

In his request Moses but expressed a universal craving. Under all skies and through all centuries there have been those who have cried out to God: "Show me now thy glory." And we seriously err unless we perceive that in each of these lands and ages there have been those who have caught glimpses of God. The Greeks sought it and caught glimpses of it in the beauty and symmetry of art. Yet they were unsatisfied, for they erected still an altar to the Unknown God. The Romans sought it and caught glimpses of it in the majesty of justice and government. Yet they were not satisfied, for they adopted into their pantheon all the gods of whom they could learn. The Jew sought this glory and caught a vision of it in the beauty of revelation and worship. Yet he, too, was unsatisfied, for he fed his soul on the expectation of a fuller

glory with the advent of Messiah's reign. The desire to see the glory of God,—to know the personal power lying back of all,—has been a passion with man since thought became possible.

The word "glory" is one of many meanings which strike responsive notes in ambitious hearts. There is something inspiring in the very suggestion. We speak of the glory of God and the glory of men. Paul spoke of the glory of sun, moon and stars. We rave over the glory of a sunset, a rose bush, and of a perfect day. We eulogize the glory of the hero, and applaud the glory of the artist. We envy the glory of the author of renown, and covet that of the composer of song. We take pleasure in contemplating the glory of Christian character. We sing "In the Cross of Christ I Glory," and in a thousand ways declare that the word has for us a peculiar charm.

Just now we have to do particularly with the glory of God. This glory is unique, peculiar to itself. We have here an inexhaustible mine of wealth, a source of infinite inspiration. The Bible writers never weary of writing on this theme. The glimpses of prophets and seers are but glimpses of His glory. It is infinite and multiform, embracing the glory of His matchless person, the glory of His wisdom, power, grace, and love. Our highest thoughts of heaven are glowing with His glory. The Westminster catechism was not wrong when it said that the chief end of man was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

We go a step farther and assert that the completeness of human life is contingent upon some vision of the glory of God. The beast may live its completed life without a conception of this glory, but man cannot. It is in the revelations of God's glory that man catches a glimpse of a higher selfhood to be attained. There is a tremendous

lifting power in such a revelation. No man can come face to face with God and remain as he was. Paul gave as the explanation of his wonderful life:

"Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

It was part of God's plan that in making man He would give him such visions of divine glory as would ever spur him to something higher.

It is in this universal craving that the highest in man is exhibited. It is but the groveling soul, the earthly clod, that does not cry out "Show me now thy glory." The glories of earth and sea and sky have proved to spiritual souls but an earnest of a glory more transcendent. "The heavens declare the glory of God," but man looks beyond the heavens! The glory of vernal tree and flower, of autumn mountain or wintry valley, of gurgling stream or mighty torrent, of majestic Niagara or more majestic Victoria, all but suggest to the thinking mind a greater glory beyond. The glory of God has burst from a thousand angles upon the soul of the seeker, but the greater the vision the greater is his thirst for more. The awakened soul cannot rest until it meets God face to face. There is a fascination in glory. We look upon it until our eyes are weary, only to look again and ravish our souls with its wonder. The introspective soul craves for it as a personal possession. Said a holy man of old: "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Herein lies the link that connects our human with the divine. The earth hungers for the glory of the sun, and forthwith there springs a flower into being. Earth reveals her oneness with the sky in the act. The souls of men look upward, and out of our fleshly, fallen, human natures there springs forth a higher life,—we are linked with the divine.

"Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe."

Moreover, the stronger the craving the greater and brighter is the vision. "In the day ye seek me with all thine heart, I will be found of thee." We do not create the vision, but the vision does create us. It lies out there in spiritual objective completeness awaiting but the seeing eye. Many pass through life with never a glimpse of God, and others walk with Him and see Him everywhere. God does not cast His pearls before swine. It is only the seer who sees. In behalf of the human race Moses cried "Show me now thy glory," and in the person of His incarnate Son God answered: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"No man can look upon my face and live" was God's answer to Moses' petition. No soul can live and behold that glory in full of which it must catch glimpses, or it cannot live at all. No eye can look unblinded upon the full glory of the sun, yet without the sun the eye would lose its sight. The seeing soul, beholding undimmed the glory of God, would be ravished with unbearable joy, or plunged to the depths of unplumbed self-abasement. Paul said of God that He "only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable." An ancient American divine said: "The glory of God is so bright that in comparison with it the light of the sun is as dark as a coal." The expression is at least graphic.

No man can look upon the glory of God's wisdom, and when we have done we can but pick out the "a's" and "i's" and "o's" like a child learning to read his primer. All the science of the ages is but as a drop in a bucket, or as the dust in the balance. We pride ourselves upon

our wisdom, but at best we have only pushed a step beyond the less learned in our investigating the mysteries of God. All the wisdom of ages, all the philosophies of time, all the libraries of the world, all the schools from whose portals men have streamed forth to help solve the mysteries and riddles of life, are but an inconsiderable part of the knowledge of the Eternal. Man cannot look upon the unveiled glory of God's wisdom and live.

The most beautiful conceptions of human thought are but shadows of the thought of God. Human life, with all its possibilities, its beauty, its glory of achievement, is but a shadow of God. The artist, the hymnist, the preacher, the poet, the composer, the inventor, the discoverer are all but indistinct and shadowy reflections of God's surpassing glory. Let all human glory be raised to the "nth" power, and add to it the glory of sunset and evening sky, of mountain and river, of forest and meadow, and these are but a hint of that glory,—the shadow of God passing by. The love and sacrifice of mother and lover are but vague suggestions of the glory of God. The sublimest poem, the most inspiring prophecy, and the noblest emotions of the soul are but defeated attempts of that glory to break through the fog of human intellect.

Man cannot look upon the holiness of God and live. Every condemning voice of conscience reminds us of the fact. What could be greater hell than for the unwashed and unpardoned to be eternally exposed to the blinding light of that righteousness before which angels retire, and human virtue sinks into black and base default? No man can live and behold the unmodified glory of God's holiness. Grace must modify that brightness and adapt it to human sight. We may continue to approach this glory through a million aeons of time, but the glory of God is always elusive and beyond us.

3. *The Effulgence of God's Glory*

We read that after God had placed Moses in a cleft of the rock He placed His hand over him as He passed by, and removed it so that Moses saw only His back parts. This, in harmony with the writers of the old dispensation, was poetry set to music. It is of a piece with what we have noticed before. "Anthropomorphism," our learned folks call it. Let us call it poetry and proceed to its unfolding. We have glimpsed in this a promise of the incarnation. Moses caught a vision of the Christ who was to be. Here, more definitely than in the promise of the seed who should crush the serpent's head, was the declaration of the coming of the Son of God. If you please, Jesus is the smoked glass through which Moses in anticipation, and we in contemplation, behold the glory of God modified to human sight.

"And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

"Who, being the effulgence of his glory, and the express image of his person, when he had made purification for sins sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

Now, lest any should think that we are taking undue liberty with the word of God in thus treating as poetry what men have been wont to interpret as hard prosaic fact, let us remind ourselves that the Master emphatically defined God, not as possessed of a body, but as Spirit. As such, and not as locally confined as physical and bodily conditions would necessitate, God can be worshipped by the spiritually minded in any place. So, too, the Articles of Religion of a large part of the Christian Church declare:

"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Thus our interpretation of the back parts of God as a poetic expression of the Messianic hope which should be realized "in later days" finds ample support.

Thus we come to speak of "the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." It is according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus that God will supply all our need. He is to strengthen us with might through His Spirit in the inner man, but "according to the riches of His glory." Let us note what this glory as revealed to us in Christ implies:

First, it is the glory of His power. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is the power of creation and of preservation. "Through Him all things consist," or hold together. He "upholds all things by the word of His power." It is likewise the power of salvation. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

Then, it is the glory of His grace. That word defies definition. It is ineffable, inexplicable, transcendent. The nearest we can approach to it is "graciousness." He was full of grace and truth,—God's supreme gentleman, the very image of His person. It is the quality of God's nature by which He stoops to our estate in order that we may rise to His estate. Christ is the courteous gentleman of the ages, courteous toward the weak, gracious toward the fallen, winning men to Himself by His gracious bearing and demeanor. "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

Again, it is the glory of God's love. Pure love is always glorious. Unselfish, sacrificing love, whether in God or man, is resplendent with the brightness of eternity. In Christ we see God's love in its highest terms. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He first loved us." "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In Christ we see the glory of God's conquest over death. The glory of his resurrection, with the implication of our resurrection, is the brightest glory of which the despairing soul of man can dream. What has not this hope meant to broken hearts? "Because I live ye shall live also." "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

And what can be more graciously glorious than Christ's humiliation? It takes the seer to catch the meaning of the words of Christ as he went to the humiliation of the cross. "Father, the hour is come that the son of man should be glorified." Any gracious act in which the high humble themselves for the lowly is glorious. And Jesus saw the path to glory as in his hour of humiliation he cried: "Father, glorify thy son, that thy son may glorify thee." His eye was single to the glory of God. It was impossible that he should not be the express image of God's person.

4. Changed From Glory to Glory

Let us tarry on the mountain of glory, and contemplate the experience of Moses in the light of Paul's interpretation in Second Corinthians. It is a matter of increasing interest to note how much of the New Testament hinges upon the old. Matthew's gospel is replete with references to ancient prophecy. Hebrews bases its entire argument upon Christ as the substance of which the religious ideas and forms in Israel were but the shadow.

Much of the imagery of Revelation is adopted from the apocalyptic writings of Israel. Paul borrows repeatedly from the Old Testament narrative to show the meaning of the Christian hope. The old is good, the new is better. The old covenant was written on stone, the new on the tables of the heart. The old was a covenant of the letter, the new of the spirit. The old was a covenant of death, the new is of life. The old was a covenant of law, the new of liberty. The old was attended with glory, the new with greater glory. The Christian is contrasted with Moses who came from God's presence reflecting such a glory that he had to veil his face from the multitude, whereas the Christian comes with face unveiled from the divine presence, not only reflecting the glory, but transformed into the image of the Divine.

Let us look a bit more closely at Paul's reference to this mountain of glory. We observe that "we are transformed by beholding, changed from glory to glory." There is growth and development here. Moreover, it is a universal privilege. "We all with unveiled face," etc. But the face is unveiled. Moses put a cover over his face, for men could not endure the glory of the holy judgment of God even when reflected from the face of man. The Jew read his sentence of death in that penetrating glory. But the Christian, coming from the place of communion with God through the merit and grace of Jesus Christ, bears a glory no less bright, but more full of love, of life and of liberty. The law of commandments gives way to "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The beholding Christian becomes a reflecting Christian, and the reflecting Christian becomes a transformed person. The word rendered "changed" or "transformed" is the same as is used in the story of the transfiguration. "Metamorphosed into the same image," if you please.

It is "Christ in you the hope of glory." Paul wrote

to the people of Galatia: "My little children of whom I am in travail again until Christ be formed in you." The position here taken seems daring and overbold, almost to the point of irreverence. Yet the Christian's life to be Christian must be glory-filled. What else can such passages mean? "I am crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." There are the words of a glory-filled soul.

What is the consummation of this life of glory? "We know not yet what we shall be, but we know that when it shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Let us re-read the story of Ernest as portrayed by Hawthorne, and in the light of the lad who was transformed through beholding and studying the great stone face let us set ourselves to the task of beholding that we, too, may reflect and be transformed. This implies a species of celestial photography in which time exposure is needed. Reflecting and transformed souls cannot be created by snap-shots. It is "they that wait on the Lord" who bear in their bodies "the marks of the Lord Jesus."

"Would you like to know the sweetness
Of the secret of our Lord?
Go and rest beneath his shadow,—
This shall then be your reward.
And whene'er you leave the presence
Of this quiet meeting place
You will surely bear the image
Of the Master in your face."

VII

A MOUNTAIN OF TRANSLATION

Deuteronomy 34:1-5

CONSULTING our spiritual Baedeker in our quest for mountain scenery, we discover that the excursion next in order is into the mountain of translation. It is the mountain of the death of Moses. We shall ascend this mountain to-day only in imagination. It is our last mountain climbing with Moses, the mountain man.

Forty years have elapsed since this man of God ascended the mountain of fire. Israel has now been brought to the outskirts of the promised land. And now God is calling him home. A most momentous life approaches its crowning. Not an ordinary death, but a translation that is a coronation awaits this sturdy hero of God. As we, in imagination, ascend this mountain side with him we step with reverent tread. There is a sublimity about the death of a great man. A sense of awe, akin to that we felt in the presence of the burning bush, is upon us. From this excursion we shall return, but we shall leave him there. Some day we shall ascend its heights never to return, but from the summit to step up into the higher realms of life and experience. Then indeed we shall embark upon the great adventure. The vague forms and shadows that conceal the outlines of this mystic height will unfold before us, and we shall be in the presence of the throne that rules the universe. The query now is, shall our ascent be with reluctant feet, as captives led against our will? Or will it be with the zest and faith of a new conquest? The greatest is before us. Let us go. But all in God's good time.

There is one aspect of this stern mountain which we will do well to contemplate. The severity of God in His unrelenting discipline which forbade Moses to enter the promised land to whose outskirts he had brought Israel. A later day has emphasized the love of God in so one-sided a way as to foster an incorrect idea. We have tended to the belief that the atonement counteracted the justice and judgment of God. A free and easy withdrawal from the consequences of sin has marked much of our religious thinking. We have passed lightly over the pronouncement: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But if we look carefully into God's dealings with Moses we will find a tender love that warms our hearts, and at the same time an unswerving justice that may well give us pause. Moses had a temper! A man without temper is as useless as an untempered blade, but a man whose temper controls him is as harmful as a sharp instrument in the hands of a child. Moses' temper lay back of his slaying the Egyptian in those early years. It lay back of his impatient smiting of the rock from which the waters flowed to slake the thirst of Israel. It lay back of the breaking of the tables of the law. Surely, a temper is a small thing! Yet it may cost a man dearly. It cost Moses the privilege of entering into the promised land. The law of God cannot be set at naught.

A veil of mystery surrounds Mount Nebo. Its exact location is open to debate. During the centuries names have changed, until several mountains in the land of Moab have been identified with it. A description of its natural characteristics is impossible, but its value for us is not geographical but spiritual, and lies entirely in its association with the death and burial of Moses. Spirits know no geographical boundaries. In spirit we climb the mountain of translation and watch the passing of the

man of God, while we contemplate the fact and experience of death. And thus let us note

1. *The Great Adventure*

Did space but permit, it would be profitable to review in detail several of the great poems on death. A few of these have so gripped the intelligent public that they are herewith referred to, but without comment. Cecil Francis Humphrey Alexander's "Burial of Moses" beautifully presents the scene before us in inspired verse. William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis" assures us of the certainty and the dignity of death, and with the exhortation of a firm trust tells us how to die, but there is a bit of icy cold in it all, and he doesn't tell us what to trust, and for what. Robert Browning throws the light of the open tomb on the subject of death as he relates "The Grammarian's Funeral" and "The Death in the Desert." Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam" will remain a literary masterpiece and a monument to Christian faith as long as the English tongue is spoken. And from the recent war came several treasures which we can ill afford to ignore. Chief among these is Alan Seegar's "I Have a Rendezvous with Death." With the death of Moses in the foreground, and with these poems affording the various viewpoints from which great souls have looked upon death, let us turn our thought to the contemplation of "The Great Adventure."

There is something distinctly adventurous about Christianity. All of life is an adventure. The adventures of faith would rival all the thrills of the Arabian Nights, with such additions as could be supplied from the histories of Ponce De Leon, Livingstone, Stanley, Roosevelt, and Peary. The spirit that dares all, claims all, and proves all is the spirit that actuated the Christ, the apostles, the heroes and martyrs of faith. But why limit the

adventurous spirit to the things that are seen? To the man of faith, death is but a new chapter in the great adventure of life. We travel the path of life until suddenly a massive wall crosses our track. We cannot surmount it, nor can we circumvent it. A fast closed door faces the adventurer. Does this mark the end of the journey? We would conclude so, were it not for the door. What lies beyond? Since the path has grown increasingly wonderful as we have proceeded, can we doubt that beyond the wall it is more wonderful still? The door is opened by invisible hands, and one catches the glimpse of things unlawful for a man to utter. It is an invitation to the greatest adventure of all.

Ordinarily it is thought that no traveler has returned to tell us about this adventure. We look with suspicion upon such light as psychical research thinks to throw upon it. But there have been a few return travelers who were seen by the disciples on the mount of transfiguration. Paul looked beyond the veil and saw things that might well exalt him above measure. Stephanas saw the curtain lifted and beheld a vision that enabled him to die in peace. John heard a voice and saw a revelation of hidden mystery that has long challenged the faith and devotion of the church. And what shall be said of the second sight of modern peoples whose sight seems to pierce the cloud that hems in our mortal seeing? Is it entirely superstition? Are these peoples altogether erratic? Who will draw the line of demarkation that will separate a victorious and luminous hope from the will-o'-the-wisp of the credulous? All we claim is that there is a door in this wall, and it swings one way, and through it men have thought to catch occasional and aggravating glimpses of a "land that is fairer than day." In hope and impatient expectancy we await the day of the great adventure.

2. When Death Comes as a Friend

Just now we are not particularly interested in the cause and nature of death. Let the biblical explanation pass unchallenged. It is with its frequent appearance breaking in upon our friendships that we are concerned. It is the inescapable conclusion of our earthly activities,—consequently something in which we are vitally (or, should we say mortally?) interested. It is the great adventure upon which all must embark. There is no question as to the "whether" of it. All centers in the "how."

We are familiar with death as an enemy, so it was the Apostle viewed him. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." He takes a mother from her home just when the little lives need her most. He takes a leader from a people who are left to wander as sheep having no shepherd. He leaves a trail of broken hearts and sorrow-scarred faces. He dashes the hopes and ambitions of youth, the expectations of maturity, and the support of old age without compunction. Here and there in each community he has his harvest field with white stones and green mounds witnessing silently to his ruthless conquest. We need not expatiate on the ravages of death. Our hearts are too sad and full as it is. We miss the voice of the little prattler that is stilled forever. We miss the face of those whom we have loved and lost awhile.

> "Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

But have we come to think of death as a friend? Was it other than as a friend that he came to Moses? Was it not a crowning day for him? Let us recognize the fact that death has an important part to play in the economy of life. It is sin which has changed its friendly

smile into the ghastly grin of hate. It is premature death that is sad. Death comes as a friend when

"the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; yea, they shall be afraid of that which is high, and terrors shall be in the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail."

This picture of old age is sublimely poetic, and death attended with faith and hope and experience is a kindly friend. We stand at the bedside of the dying aged saint and we say: "It is right, it is fitting."

Methodism's early days echoed with the shouts of victory of those who "died in the Lord." Wesley witnessed many such coronations and wrote "our Christians die well." That is it. However sick the body may be, the Christian dies well. Spiritual health is entirely consistent with physical disease in the dying of the Christian. We cannot refrain from asking whom Balaam had in mind when he said:

> "Let me die the death of the righteous,
> And let my latter end be like his."

We repeat that it is sin that turns death into an enemy. It is sin that cuts life short before it has reached its maturity and has fulfilled its mission. Sin is in the world, and death by sin. Let us not attempt to say whose sin it is, except as we recognize that it is the disobedience in which all share and in which one man's disobedience injures the well-being of all humanity. There are worse things than death. "Fear not them that kill the body,

but after that have no more that they can do," said the Master, "but fear him who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell." Death is the gate to immortality Death is the graduation day from life's school. Death is promotion day for him who has been faithful over a few things. Rightly have men spoken of the angel of death as an angel of God. It is when Satan assumes the garb of an angel of light that the tragedy of death is repeated.

It is our Christian privilege to turn the glory of hope on the spectacle of death. Providentially the old, mournful, funeral hymn is passing from usage, except in out-of-the-way corners of the land. In place of the doleful and tearful tunes of yesterday we hear the strains of "Beulah Land" and "The Glory Song." Such singing is Christian. We mean it not unkindly when we remark that most of the funeral singing of yesterday was little short of pagan in its thickened gloom.

3. *The Riddle of the Universe*

It may possibly seem that the Christian takes a great deal for granted. We confess it. Instinctively men hold to the hope of immortality. Tennyson voiced a universal faith when he wrote:

> "Thou will not leave us in the dust,
> Thou madest man,—he knows not why;
> He thinks he was not made to die,—
> And thou hast made him. Thou art just."

But the Christian goes further and faces death in the light of the cross and the open tomb. "In thy light shall we see light."

Ernst Heckel dared the wrath of God and insulted the intelligence of man when he wrote "The Riddle of the Universe." There is another riddle as old as human intelligence, and we find it propounded in one of the oldest books of the Bible. It is Job's question: "If a man die,

shall he live again?" Since the first-born among men performed the sad rite of burial over his parents this question has stirred in human hearts. Countless generations have pondered it. In health and prosperity men may ignore the question, but the presence of death with its attendant loss and broken friendship makes him philosophical. Does man's life go out as an extinguished flame? And the question, like Banquo's ghost, will not down.

It is interesting to note what men have had to say in their attempts to answer the question. Philosopher and scientist have both been asked for some contribution that will throw light on the subject. The philosopher allows that it may be an affirmative answer, but the scientist knows no fact upon which to base a conclusion. We turn from both, for the choice between a guess and a blank is a bit juiceless. Religion has largely centered in the immortality of the soul. Here the answers vary from the scepticism of the Sadducee to the metempsychosis of the Hindu. But not until we approach Christianity do we find an answer that satisfies the soul, stimulates the mind, and puts an eternal quality into life. The "guess so" of the philosopher, and the "don't know" of the scientist give way before the declaration "we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." An inner certainty, instinctive and intuitive, greets the universal problem. The mind knows facts, but the heart knows truths. The knowledge of eternal life is a truth heart-grasped.

Thus there is introduced into our thinking the problem of the resurrection. That this term expresses a wonderful truth and fact cannot be questioned in the light of Easter. Every church spire points heavenward because a band of disheartened fishermen took new courage

when they communed with the risen Christ. What the full nature of the resurrection will prove to be must await our fuller knowledge of what life is. Moses passed through some kind of an experience or he would not have been recognized with Elijah on the mount of transfiguration. What it was we do not know. We leave the explanation to Paul, who has given us much to contemplate in 1 Cor. 15. He acknowledged that it is a mystery. "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed." Life in its inception and growth, in its manifestation and expression is a mystery profound and unfathomable. Explain the growth from acorn to oak, from foetus to man, the development of will and the soul's aspirations to the divine, the power of speech, intelligence, creativeness, etc., and possibly we will come nearer to an explanation of the resurrection. Both life and death are mysteries. Light and heat are mysterious. The eternal laws of God are mysteries. The Christian is not phased when he confronts the mystery of the resurrection. He takes it for granted on the demand of his soul, the resurrection of Christ, and the assured word of divine promise.

4. The Whereabouts of Moses in the Interim

Over a thousand years had elapsed since Moses ascended the mountain of translation and surrendered his life to God. And now we behold him on another mountain top. At last he has been admitted to the promised land. He is with Elijah and the twain are talking with Christ about the death he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Do you not like that expression, "the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem?" It was a climax in Jesus' life. His death was an accomplishment! The expression is peculiar to Luke. The question arises,—where

had Moses been all of these years? As if they counted years in eternity!

Perhaps a brief study may not be out of place. We are face to face with an item of faith closely related to the experience of death, and one of long and honoured standing. We need not accept it as established fact. Enough if our hearts are open to such truth as it may convey. We speak of the abode of the soul following death and preceding the resurrection. The early fathers had definite faith along lines in which our ideas are exceedingly vague. They believed in an intermediate state. Their faith crept into ancient eschatology and regalvanized it. Purgatory was the result. The creed of the Roman, English and German Churches, as well as of other communions, includes the expression "he descended into hell." The thought finds scriptural warrant in 1 Peter 3: 18-20. Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, in which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who had been disobedient in the days of Noah.

It is evident that this provides but slim foundation upon which to build a creed, yet there are other passages to re-enforce it. The crucified Lord turned to the repentant thief and said: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The risen Christ turned to Mary and said: "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and to your God." What does it all mean? Is there a geography of heaven? Is there an outer, or border land, in which souls await a glorious resurrection, and where incompleted lives may be developed, and in which mistaken but not wilfully sinful lives may be corrected? We do not know, and it is useless to speculate. But if God has made such a provision it would be just like Him. And may it not be that from this mystic, yet beautiful, para-

dise of God, Moses and Elijah came to talk with Jesus, and faces we have loved long since and lost awhile reappear to us in our dream? This borderland between heaven and earth! How thin is the veil on the earthward side! How close to the city that hath foundations, on the heavenward side! We will not be dogmatic. We will neither affirm or deny. We only say that such a provision fills us with hope for those who have died, as the countless heathen have died, without knowledge of Christ. It gives us hope for loved ones whose worth we have known, but whose open acquiescence in things sacred to us has been refused.

We have ascended other mountains and have found their frowns change to smiles as we have become acquainted with them. Be it even so with the mountain of translation. Let us not hasten the day when we must climb it alone, but when that day comes let us not approach it with fear, but with hope and faith. With clean lives and high hearts we will mount its sloping sides bravely, knowing that from its top we will step into a realm of pure life, and ultimately into the presence of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to be forever with Him.

VIII

A MOUNTAIN OF CONSPIRACY

2 Samuel 15:30-18:33

HITHERTO our mountain climbs have been pleasant and healthful. The beauty of nature has surrounded us. The strength of the hills has crept into our souls. The atmosphere has been rare, and the landscape has been inspiring. The sternness of the mountain of law melted into loving-kindness as we ascended its rugged sides. Even the pall that hung over the mountain of death was found to be but a veil hiding the beyond from our curious gaze.

To-day we will journey into a mountain which we will climb again with other company. It is not far removed from the mountain of sacrifice. We have been in this neighbourhood before. But how different is the atmosphere of this mountain from that we have been breathing! There is a suffocation about it. We seem to smell the vapours of perdition. It is psychically volcanic. We must watch our step and beware lest the crater opens at our feet and we be poisoned with the fumes of hell.

The story of David and Absalom is of perennial interest. It speaks a message to both parents and children which we do ill to ignore. It is a tragedy when the domestic circle is broken by intrigue and conspiracy. There is something damnable about conspiracy that savours of the broth of hell. Hence the heavy and dark atmosphere that poisons us as we breathe. First, it is Absalom's conspiracy against David. Then, on the very mount where later the Saviour sweat great drops of blood because of the conspiracy of men, David lays his plans to counteract the iniquitous proceeding.

Our tarrying here must be brief, yet not so that we fail to learn the lessons to be learned from this elevation. And first let us note

1. *The Boomerangs of God*

How replete is the Bible with words of warning and admonition!

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth THAT shall he also reap."

"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life."

"I, Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing loving kindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

The tragedy of the mountain of conspiracy reaches back into the valley. Indeed the poisonous atmosphere we inhale here is but the miasma of certain valleys in David's moral and spiritual life that has been wafted into the mountain. And it all began with Bathsheba. The unbridled passion of King David brought a thousand evils in its train. It brought about the conscious defeat in David's own soul. Had that stronghold been defended later history would have read differently. One of the greatest calamities of sin is the breaking down of the moral defenses of the soul. Moreover, it brought about the death of Uriah. It led to the assumption of a tyrannical power that David had not previously shown. The man of heart became in some ways a man of stone. And then the death of the little son of David and Bathsheba! What punishment will just Heaven inflict upon parents whose uncontrolled lust has brought sickly babes into the world but to die? Can it be other than murder that

causes the annual toll in infant mortality? Then it broke out in the violation of Tamar, David's daughter, by her own brother. This led to his death at the avenging hand of her brother Absalom. Absalom's flight led to the conspiracy and rebellion. It all traces back to a man's fall into selfish sin.

It is a remarkable fact that men have never doubted the justice of God. Their interpretations of that justice have not always agreed. But they have recognized this as a foundation stone on which to erect a life or a civilization that would stand. No man, and no nation, can sin with impunity. Germany is the most recent example of this vain idea. As sure as to-morrow's sun will rise, your besetting sin will get you and you will reap what you sow. There is but one defense from the consequences of sin,—a purging from sin. Many a life has thought to indulge in sin, thinking to get away with it and its consequences, only to find in later life some goblet of the wine of joy dashed from the hand. Sin blights and damns, and there is no avoiding its consequences. The apples of Sodom are always filled with ashes. They appeal to the eye, but their taste is the taste of death.

The boomerangs of God are no "fiction of the mortal mind." The curse of the sin of the world is the explanation of all the sorrow and pain in life. The accumulation of centuries has but accelerated the return of the boomerang. "The soul that sinneth shall die." We may protest that it isn't fair, but a deeper justice demands that the iniquities of the fathers be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Or, perhaps we had better say the exceeding sinfulness of sin is revealed in its injury to the unborn. It is not the justice of God, but the condemnation of sin. The gospel tells us how to "flee from the wrath to come." It is God's attempt to rescue man from the clutches of sin.

There is another and brighter aspect to this view which we behold. It comforts our hearts to note how human were the men of God. Was not Abraham at fault with Hagar? Was not Moses a man of anger which needed frequent disciplining? And back-sliding David,—was he not "a man after God's own heart?" Most truly, though not because, but in spite of his sin. There are sins God can forgive when a broken and a contrite heart makes full confession and brings forth fruit meet for repentance. Ann Aldrich has voiced a great truth, worthy of wide acceptance.

"Thank God, that God shall judge my soul, not man;
I marvel when they say,
'Think of that awful day
No pitying fellow sinner's eye shall scan
With tolerance thy soul,
But His who knows the whole,
The God whom all men own is wholly just.'
Hold thou that last word dear,
And live untouched with fear.
He knows with what strange fires he mixed this dust.
The heritage of race,
And circumstance and place
Which make us what we are, were from his hand.
That left us, faint of voice,
Small margin of choice.
He gave, I took. Shall I not fearless stand?
Hereditary bent
That hedges in intent
He knows, be sure, the God who shaped thy brain.
He loves the souls he made.
He knows His own hand laid
On each the mark of some ancestral stain.
Not souls severely white
But groping for more light
Are what eternal justice here demands.
Fear not. He made thee dust.
Cling to that sweet word 'just.'
All's well with thee if thou art in just hands."

The holy man of old,—was it indeed David in an inspired mood?—wrote:

"Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness.
He will not always chide;
Neither will he keep his anger forever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his loving kindness toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.
For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust."

We turn from David, for we leave him with his God. He has sinned, and on the track of his sin follow a litter of vulpine whelps which bid fair to destroy not only the sinner but his kingdom and his home. We know that he repented, for we have his confession in Psalm 51. The God who pardoneth iniquity and transgression and sin heard the cry, and a new song was put in his mouth, even praise to his God.

How about Bathsheba! Was David alone the aggressor? Who knows? Let us turn from the revolting associations of the whole tragedy. But stop, and note that Bathsheba was one of the line of ancestry through whom God was preparing to effect the incarnation. Divine mercy "knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust." But "man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." There is a snobbishness of Phariseeism that pertains to much religious profession. It is this that God would rebuke when He chooses an ancestress for His Son in the person of Rahab, or a Ruth, or a Bathsheba.

2. Fighting fire With Fire

During the world war the allies were surprised by the deadly and diabolical contrivances of the Central Powers.

Humane warfare became impossible. Against our will, our conscience, and all our preconceptions of honour, we found it necessary to fight fire with fire. It was even so with David. His heart was with his rebellious son, Absalom. How much of his own youthful spirit he could see here displayed we can only guess. But Absalom had conspired against him, and in self-defense David, too, had to resort to the strategy of war to prevent Absalom in his wild design. Hence the mountain of conspiracy. We read

"And it came to pass, that, when David was come to the top of the ascent, where God was worshipped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head. And David said unto him, If thou passest on with me, then thou wilt be a burden unto me; but if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant in time past, so will I now be thy servant; then wilt thou defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city; and Absalom came into Jerusalem."

However apparently necessary conspiracy and deceit may be, it is an evil, whether in the hands of nations, societies or individuals. It may be the lesser of two evils, but its nature is not changed. It is open to question whether ideal standards of conduct can always be carried out in an unideal world. There is little that is ideal about warfare, yet war may become necessary. We may argue that only those friendly to our interests are entitled to the knowledge that an enemy might use to our harm. The limitation of human wisdom and character often seems to necessitate indirection. Diplomacy is not tact. To be diplomatic will sometimes twinge the conscience. Any lie is of the devil. Hushai was definitely delegated to act the lie with Absalom. Let us leave this point of ethics for philosophers and moralists to debate.

It was not inadvertently that the capital F was used in spelling fire. There is fire and Fire. The Bible has

some unimportant things to say about fire, but nothing that is unimportant to say about Fire. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with Fire." "Cloven tongues as of Fire sat upon each of them." We use the word in its spiritual meaning.

"Oh that the fire from heaven might fall,
And all our sins consume!
Come Holy Ghost, on Thee I call,
Spirit of burning, come!"

The Christian is a citizen of an ideal kingdom. He walks in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. His world is not the world in which most men live. His feet are planted on higher ground. He is called to be a great adventurer. He must be a pioneer where others hold back. Jesus gave an entirely new ethical code which he has challenged his followers to apply to the problems of society. As a whole we are too timid to make the attempt. Who of us thinks of "turning the other cheek also," or of "giving our cloak also," or of "going with him twain?" But humanity waits for the experiment to be tried when the followers of Jesus will obey his word and follow his ideal.

The *lex talionis* is the law of unsanctified human nature. The law of the kingdom is "love thy neighbour as thyself." Forgiveness is the keynote in all social adjustments and human relations. It is hard to measure up, indeed impossible to the unconverted. The natural man is impelled by an innate virile sense of justice to knock down the man who attacks weakness, imposes on innocency, or who vilifies the name of virtue. A knock-down or two has often proved most salutary. We sometimes wonder if there isn't a place for more modern Peter Cartwrights. But the spirit of Christ, the fire that burns but does not consume, glows with a steady passion that is illuminating and warming. It is of the nature of

the Shekinah. It is the warmth of love, not the heat of indignation. And the Master himself dared challenge men to fight fire with Fire,—the divine fire of God. The Apostle put it tersely:

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

It may be that many of us must get back to the place of penitence and tarry until we can pray with the hope of pardon:

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

3. *Is the Young Man Safe?*

Notwithstanding his sin and weakness, David in many respects reveals to us the father-heart of God yearning over His rebellious children. Again and again the anxious inquiry is made: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" How full is the Bible of God's fatherhood! The story of the prodigal son is the best presentation man has had of the forgiving love of the anxious father. "Father-God!" Yes, that is it. Thank you, dear friend, for giving me that phrase. It breathes of Jesus. It breathes of prophecy. It breathes of heaven. The fatherhood "from which every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named."

We turn from David to Absalom, and the suspicion arises that David began asking this question about thirty years too late. Absalom was not safe, and had not been safe in all the years since his father's sin had cast a pall over the house of David. It is a lamentable thing when a child must be defended from his own parent. Absalom was not safe with himself. Rebellion is never a safe companion. Flattering friends and an imperious will are not moral safeguards. There is something that we cannot help admiring in the young fellow who visited with

a dog's death the defiler of Tamar. It is not a safe thing to be a king's son. Ambitions creep in which bid fair to eclipse loyalty and judgment. Jealousy between the aspirants for high place is not a safe atmosphere for young ideals. No, David, Absalom is not safe. Would to God you had begun asking that question years earlier.

What is the difference between being "safe" and "saved"? No man is safe until he is saved, nor saved until he is safe. Does the idea of safety savour too much of timidity? That is the mistake of the interpretation. Jesus never taught "Safety First!" but he said: "Seek ye first the kingdom." There is no moral or religious safety, no intellectual safety, outside of the kingdom of Christ. Physical safety must be often forgotten if moral ideals be preserved. The safety of a nation may demand the physical risk and ruin of her youth. But there is a sense of virile and adventurous daring may be infused in the word "safe." Safety without heroism and character is but the windshield for weaklings. Heroism and character make for safety in all things worth-while.

Is the young man safe? Until he is saved he is neither safe for himself nor safe for others. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word." Civilization is not safe with unbridled passion and ignorance going wild. Nor is the young man safe until civilization has surrounded him with such safeguards that it will be easier to be manly, pure, strong, and chivalrous. We need a revival of old-time chivalry. The advent of the working girl and business woman has somewhat dislocated some ancient customs. The worship of the virgin introduced the age of chivalry, and the womanhood of Christendom came to a higher plane than womanhood elsewhere in the world. It is a sad loss if the spirit of chivalry cannot be adapted to the new day.

The young man is not safe until he has learned that his body, mind, social nature, and spirit life are alike subject to the ministry of Christ. And the church fails as a saving institution until with unusual wisdom she recognizes and proceeds to minister to the fourfold nature of the young man. Are the young men of America safe? The appalling figures of rejected draftees during the war is a negative answer. Without seeking to lay unnecessary burdens upon shoulders already overborne, we may at least suggest that no young man is safe until his father is a companion, and a wise guide to his adventurous feet. The young man is not safe until his sister is safe. The young man is not safe so long as social custom and costumes play upon his nature, aggravating his battle for self-mastery. Women of America, in the name of the young men of to-day and to-morrow, and in the name of the young man Christ, uplift the ideal of social purity, and in manner of dress and deportment re-establish on the throne of the young man's heart that ideal woman whose influence will always bless him, and make of him in the truest sense "a man after God's own heart." Could we put into the following words the strength of courageous manhood, rather than the trust of the child, they might well be the song of redeemed young manhood everywhere:

"I am safe when I look to Jesus,
Safe from the tempter's snare,
Safe when I follow his footsteps,
And trust in his loving care.

I am safe when I look to Jesus,
Safe from the victim's fate,
Safe from the woes of failure,
And the blight of sin and hate.

I am safe when I look to Jesus,
Safe from discouragement:
Safe from petty vexations,
And free from discontent.

I am safe when I look to Jesus,
Safe from all doubt and greed:
Safe from the world's defilement,
Aud supplied in all my need.

CHORUS
Yes, safe, I am safe in Jesus,
For time and eternity.
I will look to my guide,
I will walk by his side,
And trust him,—my Deity.

I am safe when I look to Jesus,
Safe from the fear of death:
Safe for my Lord is near me,
And I feel his life-giving breath

CHORUS
I'm safe, yes I'm safe in Jesus.
My soul is now satisfied.
I will trust in his power,
I will serve him each hour
Until I am glorified.

They are the words of a virile man, written in the days of a young and virile ministry, and express the secret of a life that has been kept clean through "looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith."

4. The Wages of Sin is Death!

What a tragic sight, to behold Absalom,—handsome and winsome Absalom,—hanging by the hair from a tree, and thrust through with a sword! Who slew Absalom? Was it Joab? No,—but David. Something of far greater worth had been slain within the soul of Absalom years before this, and the hand that slew was the king's own hand. He slew Absalom when he slew Uriah.

Of what avail now are thy idle tears, O king? It is useless to moan and weep,—"O Absalom, Absalom, would I had died for thee." It is too late! The time for that was when Absalom was yet a boy. You plead your kingly duties did not leave you time? But you were a

father before you became a king. Possibly your kingship would have been more heaven blessed had your fatherhood been more divinely possessed. The curse of sin lies partly in the fact that others help us reap our harvest.

Let us clamber down from this mountain of conspiracy. We want to catch other visions that will revive and refresh us. But the memory of this luckless mountain of conspiracy will continue with us many a day. Let us humbly bow before our all-wise and loving Father and leave our own rebellings, and like the young man who came to himself and returned home, let us say: "Father, I have sinned before heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." Then, too, methinks we will somewhere hear an echo:

"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name."

IX

A MOUNTAIN OF DECISION

1 Kings 18

ABRAHAM has ascended and descended the mountain of sacrifice with Isaac. Moses has met God in the mountains of fire, of victory, of law, of glory, and of death. David, bemoaning the rebellion of Absalom, has long since descended from the Mount of Olives, whence he saw the unfolding tragedy of his own sin. Several generations have elapsed since this last mountain excursion. They have been generations of gradual degeneration in the royal house until now incompetent Ahab, with his spirited but dangerous consort Jezebel, holds the reins of government.

In our excursion to the mountain of decision we must make an extensive journey to the north, and slightly to the west, from the mountain of conspiracy. The coast of Palestine is generally marked by plains, but a promontory reaches out into the Mediterranean Sea between the plains of Sharon and Akka. Mount Carmel, the scene of Elijah's conflict with the priests of Baal, extends from within land out into this promontory of which it is undoubtedly the physical explanation. Due west from the sea of Tiberias, it occupies a unique position geographically, and one destined to play an important part in the history of Israel, and, indeed, of the world.

The situation was one where such a contest might well be staged. Located at the lower end of the country of the Phoenicians, where Baal worship predominated, and whence Jezebel had come, and at the northernmost point of the coast where Israel's territory extended, it was bringing the challenge to the enemy's door when Elijah

chose this position as that where the rival claims of Baal and Jehovah should be settled.

And now, in imagination, we are climbing this mountain of decision with Elijah, the stern and rugged man of God. To the west is the sea; to the north the plain of Akka; to the south is the plain of Sharon; while on the east is the plain of Esdraelon. The scene is one fitting for what is about to transpire. But let us look for a moment at the character and personality of him in whose company we climb. His very name awakens our interest. Was it his baptismal name, so to speak? Or was it a name given by later generations because of the specific work he had accomplished? "Eli-jah"—Jehovah is my God! Of his origin we know little save that he was known as the "Tishbite." An element of mystery surrounds the entire life of the man. He suddenly appears from the rugged mountains, gaunt, with uncut hair and clothed in animal skin. The burden of his cry is a return to Jehovah by backsliding Israel, and the rejection of the worship of Baal. He departs as quickly as he came, and men said that the spirit of God took him hither and yon. And when at last he leaves the scene of conflict it is to be transported into the celestial realm in a chariot of flame drawn by horses of fire. Is this more poetry? He is delegated of God, in company with Moses, to return after many years, and announce to the Lord the decease he is about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

The personality of the man fills the whole horizon. It is through this medium that we note the spiritual significance of this viewpoint. Our interest is less in the geography of the situation than it is in the spiritual forces at work and the outcome of the contest that was waged here. This we may study more intelligently if we note a few of the outstanding characteristics of the story. And first we note the offense of indecision.

1. Lame in Both Legs

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Such was the challenge of Elijah to vacillating Israel. But the real significance of the wording has been lost because we have failed to see the grim humour of the man. What he really said was: "How long go ye limping between the two sides?" or "on both legs." It is well to recall the circumstances of the story. Ahab had married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. Her religion, as was that of the rest of the Phoenicians, was Baal worship. It was an odd mixture of impurity, human sacrifice, and sun worship. Jezebel was a missionary queen, and Baal-worship speedily threatened to supplant the worship of Jehovah among the people of Israel. It was fashionable to imitate the queen. The priests of Baal became ruling factors in the religious life and international relations in Israel. A house divided against itself cannot stand. A nation cannot be half loyal and half idolatrous. Man cannot serve God and mammon. The issue must be settled. Heroic measures are often wiser than diplomacy. At any rate Elijah was not a diplomat. He was a fearless and courageous patriot, loyal to Israel and to Israel's God. Therefore the challenge is given to the people to choose between Jehovah and Baal, and to base their choice upon the result of a trial about to be made as to which could rightfully claim to be divine.

Be it noted that God invites an honest investigation of His claims. The worship of Jehovah is the only worship that has nothing to fear from investigation. It has no superstitions to protect, and no false hopes to support. The searchlight of truth reveals no flaws in its fabric. It is true that shallow faith has often dreaded the revelations of science, but nothing antagonistic to religion and righteousness has been discovered in science. God has

repeatedly challenged men to make honest investigation in the matter of faith. It is "Come and see!" "Prove me now herewith," "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," and "If Jehovah be God, follow him." And the challenge is made on the basis of practical effect. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

But God requires action consistent with knowledge. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Moral responsibility extends no further than knowledge, but failure in the face of knowledge becomes criminal. It is sin to postpone any decision when the rightness of the decision is grasped. God accommodates Himself to every reasonable test of honest hearts. To delay decision when God has done His part is dishonesty, and akin to falsehood and of unworthy character. The inconsistency of indecision is met both within and without the church. Half-hearted allegiance is no allegiance. There is little difference between the worldly-minded Christian and the Israelite who vacillated between Baal and Jehovah. The allegiance and devotion of the whole heart is required. In no uncertain terms He has said: "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spew thee out of my mouth." And indecision outside the church is traceable largely to indecision within. The honest outsider does not wish to become that type of a Christian, and we honour him for it.

Indecision cripples the entire life. It is "lame in both legs." There never was a great soul which was not a person of decision. It takes decision to make success in any sphere. The greatness of the master mind lies in knowing the thing to do, and defying hell to prevent its accomplishment. No commander, no statesman, no musician, no artist, no educator, has ever succeeded on indecision. No Christian ever succeeded without the exercise of will. Decision is the first step in actual conversion.

"I will arise and go unto my father and say, father I have sinned." The supreme success of sin is a weakened will. Most people know the right, and in general prefer it, but wishbone hasn't hardened into backbone. The greatest victory of Christianity is in a restored will power.

2. The God That Answers By Fire

That was a desperate challenge Elijah dared to make. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." The odds apparently were in favor of Baal,—the sun god. It is true that fire was the accepted symbol of Jehovah, for, had He not appeared in the blazing furnace that passed between the divided sacrifice of Abraham? Had He not revealed Himself in the burning bush, in the pillar of fire, in the flame that consumed the offering of Manoah, and in the Shekinah? But popular sentiment, and numbers, and royal support, and nature itself were all seemingly enrolled on the side of Baal and against Jehovah.

It is a needless task to try to explain the outcome of the contest. Whether the fire that consumed the offering and altar was a quietly consuming fire, or whether it was a lightning's flash from heaven, who can say? Enough that something took place of sufficient significance to recall the allegiance of Israel to the loyal worship of Jehovah. We have but the account in Kings to tell us what that was. And the worship of Jehovah was justified on the basis of the test,—"The God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

It is at this point that decision must be made in all spiritual concerns. The best of life is developed at white heat. The prayers that avail must be fervent prayers. The proof of the Messiahship of Jesus lay in his baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The fulfillment of the promise of power to the apostolic band was witnessed

in the descent of the cloven tongue like as of fire which sat upon each of them. The lives of conquest have been those which "burned but were not consumed." There is little to commend a faith whose fires have died down. Doubt and superstition may burn with a frenzy, but the God-empowered life is one that glows with a radiance that blesses with the warmth of the sun of spring. The Christ-illumined soul will be a soul on fire. Only so can it become a light in the world.

Right here a distinction must be made. Sin likewise sets a soul on fire, but it burns the soul out. It burns out memory. It burns out intelligence. It burns out purity and love. It burns out the ideals of life. Sin scorches the soul, blasts, withers and destroys it. But the fire that descends from heaven is like the warmth of the body of the brooding bird that hatches the egg. It is like the sun's warmth which, piercing the glass in the cold frame, causes the seed to germinate and come to life. Under this baptism of fire the individuality is developed and not obliterated. Self is accentuated and not destroyed.

A review of the history of Christianity shows the lives of earth's greatest glowing with a halo that radiates from a fire within. Burning and shining lights are they, many of them brands plucked from the burning. The fires of the martyrs were not all the fires in which they perished. Their light of faith and fervour of devotion has done much to keep life in the cold bodies of backsliding moderns. The light that shone from Savonarola's eye, the warmth that radiated from the heart of Huss, the fervour that burned on the altar of the heart of Cranmer, were the real fires that witnessed a living faith to a dying world. It was the same fire that burned in the soul of Augustine, of Anselm, of Francis, and of Bernard of Clairvaux. It burned on the altars of Wyclif, and

Luther, and Wesley. It lightened the countenance of Roger Williams, and Jonathan Edwards, and its torch was handed on to Beecher and Spurgeon and Parker and Brooks. Nor has its fire been extinguished while we have men like Jowett, and Cambell Morgan, and Goodell, and Hughes, and Gypsey Smith, and others too numerous to name to bear it on. And in the soul of God's humble toilers glows the holy gleam akin to the sun of righteousness that shines so resplendent in the firmament of those whose roll has been called. The father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only God who baptizes with a fire that burns but does not consume.

"O that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow,
Burn up the dross of base desire
And make the mountains flow!

O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for thee I call;
Spirit of burning come!

Refining fire, go through my heart;
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole."

We have chosen thus to dwell on the fire of God as a fire of blessing. However, there is a note that needs resounding in these modern days. "Our God is a consuming fire." "He is like refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." There is a quality in fire that makes it unparalleled as a destroyer and as a purifier. Much has been said of the fires of hell. The fires of hell are but the blazing wrath of a holy God who destroys whatever is inimical to His creation. The love of God is not inconsistent with His wrath. Holy love must smite in wrath whatever destroys the object of love. Jonathan Edwards brought sinners to repentance as he dilated on "Sinners

in the Hands of an Angry God." Tolerance of evil is acquiescence in its damage. There is a divine wrath which needs re-emphasis. The "desire to flee from the wrath to come" is as legitimate an occasion for uniting with the Christian Church as has yet been found.

3. When One Was More Than Four Hundred and Fifty

There is something unique about God's arithmetic. Its arithmetical progression is a bit startling. "One of you shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight." Its laws of addition and subtraction are quite unusual. Division is but a process of multiplication. The meal of a small lad feeds above five thousand to repletion. So in the mountain of decision we find one is more than four hundred and fifty.

There is an old saying that "one with God is a majority." Luther at Worms but illustrated its truth. Elijah on Carmel is a far more inspiring illustration. It took courage to dare royalty and popularity as he did. A man must know where he stands, and must have a mighty grip upon God to do that. Four hundred and fifty priests of Baal against one lone man! Did we say "one lone man?" Your pardon. He was not alone. We forgot about God! You may subtract four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, together with Baal himself and the queen consort thrown in, from one lone prophet of God plus God, and the subtraction has not even made an impression. It is as though nothing were subtracted.

There is a grim humour about Elijah's taunting these frenzied fanatics. Possibly his taunts, unexpurgated, would scarcely pass in the best drawing-room society of to-day. Elijah was not a society man. But the grim humour turns to the coldness of steel as the contest turns in favour of Jehovah. And four hundred and fifty men

are taken to the brook Kishon and there slaughtered. It is not ours to criticise the act. It was but a necessary step in stamping out an evil that was undermining not only the faith, but the national integrity of Israel. It was an act of war. War demands stern measures. It took a brave man to do all that Elijah did.

Incidentally,—are we not a bit in danger of becoming soft in our attempt to apply the golden rule? Are there not occasions when the rigour and severity of vengeance are needed? Nature knows little of forgiveness, and God is the God of nature. It is difficult for us to see wherein a hard and severe penalizing can accord with mercy and love. But there are unpardonable sins. Much ado has been made of the Christian's duty to forgive. But have we taken into account the conditions of forgiveness?

Does the Divine forgive the unrepentant? Are not "fruits meet for repentance" insisted upon before pardon is promised? Are we not taught "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors?" Is not the Divine procedure a worthy pattern for us? Then let us have done with a weak and puling insipidity that calls itself Christian. Let us adopt measures that are sufficient with which to cope with red-handed evil. And let us glory in the divine justice that will put to death four hundred and fifty men rather than suffer the people of God to become contaminated. Words of this kind will shock the ultra-sensitive. There are those who shudder at a Christian's wrath as at an unclean thing. There are those who forget that the Lord himself said: "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." The book of Revelation gives us a different picture of the Christ than we are accustomed to see. He is the conquering King of kings and Lord of lords. Before him the nations of the earth shall quail, and many will seek

to escape from his presence and shall not be able. The "lamb as it had been slain" proves to be "the lion of the tribe of Judah." In his hand is a sharp, two-edged sword. It is he who has trod the winepress of his enemies. We serve the Prince of Peace, but we remember that he is such by virtue of his righteous wrath against all that make for the destruction of peace.

The rule of the majority must stand, minority reports notwithstanding. But one with God constitutes the majority that must rule. A league of nations without God is but hollow mockery. A treaty without God is but a scrap of paper. But God plus one honest and courageous soul can still defeat injustice, overthrow tyranny, and put in motion such endeavours as will make for a new heaven and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness. It may mean the death of him who stands alone for God, but what then? Such death is indeed the crown of life. The question will remain unanswered because of the lack of candidates for the honour, but would not the cost be justified if even five hundred men of God stood to-day apparently alone for some high principle, and defied death and defeat? What if they died? Would the principles for which they died fall to earth? Such a vital transmutation into the coin of the kingdom would do much to revive the lagging faith of a sluggish church, and the cynic would have to seek new quarters. Who follows in his train?

4. The Sound of Abundance of Rain.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Elijah was a man of faith and prayer. He had predicted that unless Baal worship ceased the land should become dry and God would withhold the rain. And now for three years and a half the heavens had withheld the refreshing showers. The contest on Carmel

had resulted in the re-establishment of Jehovah on the throne of Israel's faith. And Elijah turned to Ahab while as yet the brazen sky poured down its blinding heat: "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain."

Note the contrast of the two men! Both went up,—Ahab to eat and drink, but Elijah to pray. Back up to the top of Carmel went the prophet with his servant, and there he knelt in prayer. We know not what were his words, nor how long he tarried. But he sent his servant to see if there were any sign of rain. Disappointment awaited the man of prayer. But he continued in prayer. Again he sent his servant, but there was no indication of rain. Still he tarried. Again, and yet again, until seven times had passed, was the servant sent, and at length there was seen a cloud rising out of the sea, but insignificantly small. But Elijah knew his God. Jehovah had answered with fire, and now He will answer with water. And Elijah's faith is rewarded. In a little while the heavens were black with clouds and wind, and the rain came in torrents. Elijah's faith has again been justified.

The sceptic smiles at the prayer of faith. We have rationalized prayer into a mere pious exercise of doubtful objective power. But such prayer is as weak as water. It dies of itself. But the prayer of faith, the fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous man availeth much. There are limits to its possibilities. It cannot restore an arm or leg that has been removed. It cannot recall a hasty word. It cannot change one's nationality. It cannot change the past. But its powers have never been adequately tried. The world waits, the church waits, the Saviour waits for the prayer of faith.

"There is the sound of abundance of rain." It makes much difference how one says this. If he says it merely

for effect he is a dishonest man. But if with heart close to the heart of God, he knows that rain is needed and is in God's plan, he dare promise it and then challenge God to honour his faith. But such prayers must be fiery, fervent prayers. They must be prayers in which the praying one desires the thing sought more than food or rest. He must wait on God. There is a new experience for the Church of Christ if ever she will seriously betake herself to believing prayer. Showers of spiritual blessing but wait for honest souls who will pray them down. Showers of temporal blessing but wait for souls who will believe God's promise in fulfillment of stewardship. Heaven isn't arid. The windows are closed. And a faithless church has closed them in her own face. Revival showers are needed to revive the vineyard of God. Pentecostal outpourings are needed to reclaim a dying world.

"Water, water, everywhere,
But not a drop to drink."

God's hand is not shortened, nor His ear heavy. The rain will come when Israel again turns from her Baal-worship and "seeks the Lord while he may be found."

"Unanswered yet? The prayer your lips have pleaded
In agony of heart these many years?
Does faith begin to fail. Is hope departing?
And think you all in vain those falling tears?
Say not the Father hath not heard your prayer!
You shall have your desire sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Tho' when you first presented
This one petition at the Father's throne,
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking,
So urgent was your heart to make it known.
Tho' years have passed since then, do not despair;
The Lord will answer you sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say 'ungranted';
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done;

The work began when first your prayer was uttered,
And God will finish what he has begun.
If you will keep the incense burning there,
His glory you shall see sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;
Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock;
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, "It shall be done sometime, somewhere."

CHARLIE D. TILLMAN.

X

A MOUNTAIN OF REVELATION

1 Kings 19

THERE are mountains of lesser degree whose significance to us is but passing. We look upon them and enjoy them for the moment, only to pass on to more majestic heights. But there are others which we love, where we tarry long, and which we leave but to return to them as often as we may. There is a personality about a real mountain that grips the soul. It is the personality of God who seeks to speak through it to the mountain possibilities within us. There are mountains whose names are known throughout the world. The Matterhorn, the Jungfrau, Fujiyama, Pike's Peak, the Mount of the Holy Cross, and Mount Washington are but a few of the well known and best loved mountains. To these as to a strong heart's love the soul turns its eyes repeatedly.

It is even so with Mount Horeb, or Sinai. Well was it called the mount of God. It was here that Moses saw the burning bush, and hither he later came to receive the law which was not only to govern Israel, but was to influence the rest of the civilized world. It was here that the glory of God burst on his soul in the promise of the coming incarnation. And now Elijah, descending from the mountain of decision, though in somewhat of a hurry, betakes himself at the Divine behest to this same mountain which becomes a mountain of revelation.

We ascend this mountain again to-day, interested not so much in its peculiar character as in its significance in the revelation of God. There are places where God's presence grows on one. There are spots whose loveli-

ness bespeaks the graciousness of God. There are elevations whose influence gives life a broader outlook. There are localities where the stern and eternal grandeur of a sovereign God bursts in majesty on the soul. Horeb is such a place. Duty, law, glory and revelation are here writ large in the granite of the hills. It was a good place for Moses. It was a good place for Elijah. It will prove a good place for us that we may tarry.

From the heights of Horeb we behold the panorama of human life. The vision is kaleidoscopic in its variations, yet the same elements persist throughout. It is here that weak humanity approaches the divine, and the mighty characters of the Bible appear very little and very human. It is best that it is so. Distinctions are largely human creations. Notwithstanding the outstanding bignesses and spiritual worth that occasionally show like veins of precious ore, the soil and rock that we behold are quite the same. Distinctions tend to disappear in the presence of the mountains, and of death, and of God. The truly great and eternal things both lower and raise humanity to much of a common level. War revealed the same elements of the heroic in tramp and aristocrat. Learning and ignorance found much in common. Wherever we see it life constantly reveals "the one touch of nature that makes all the world akin." Kipling wrote with prophetic insight:

> "For the colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady
> Are sisters under the skin."

It is always a sad revelation, yet withal a healthful one, when we discover that our idol has clay feet. How much better we would have liked Moses had he retained the control of his temper! Oh, if David had only been a perfect man! How sorry we are that Elijah lost his nerve! And Peter, why did you have to curse and swear, as if denying your Lord were not enough? And

Paul, didn't your conscience hurt you that you had that sharp contention with Barnabas over John Mark? But hold!

> "Not souls severely white
> But struggling for more light
> Are what eternal justice here demands."

Are we not comforted after all? Abraham and Moses, David and Elijah were men of like passions with ourselves. Occasionally we catch glimpses of a wonderful character. Thank God! the glimpses are genuine. But there is likewise much which oblivion kindly conceals from public gaze. There was but one Christ, and they crucified him. Yes, the idol has clay feet. Different idols have different degrees of clayness. No man should be satisfied with the clayness of his own feet, neither should he allow the possibility of being accepted as an idol. Pedestals are unsafe elevations. There is a significance to Paul's words which we do well to recall:

> "For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith."

Brother Elijah, we are glad for your strength and courage, your heroism and success, but we find just a grain of unsanctified satisfaction in the discovery that you had your moments when stock was below par! We love you more though we fear you less for your humanness!

Here from the mountain of revelation we would glimpse not only whatever new visions may unfold before us, but we would follow the path by which the approach was made and the ascent carried out. The approach began in the wilderness, but a short way from Mount Carmel, and its trail winds down through a forty days' journey until we come to the mount of revelation.

Let us revert to the starting point in the wilderness. From the mount of decision the prophet had gone south to Beersheba, where he left his servant, and then went a day's journey into the wilderness. Here was the first camping place in the approach to the mountain of revelation. In this wilderness spot we tarry and note

1. How God Deals With Despondency

There is no doubt about it. Elijah was suffering with nerves. The strain had been too great. Apparently single-handed and alone, he had wrested the faith of Israel away from the cult of Baal. It was a heroic accomplishment, but it was not yet complete. And at the height of his success the word of Queen Jezebel was just sufficient to fill him with terror, and he arose and "went for his life." His nerve force was shattered, his vision perverted, and his courage depleted. He wished for himself that he might die. He had yet to learn that he was not the only loyal Israelite, but that there were still seven thousand who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal. But there is time for that ahead. Elijah is a fit subject for skilled care. A false move may wreck an entire life. Let us note how God goes about it.

It is indeed cause for devout thanksgiving that we have a sane and rational God! Experience suggests that there are many worthy folk who would have followed a different method in dealing with Elijah. How much of so-called "back-sliding" could be traceable to nerves? We can well imagine some pious brother, whose heart is greatly grieved at the prophet's fall from grace, calling a meeting of kindred minds to pray over the exhausted subject. Not so with God. Need number one,—get away! Need number two,—get farther away! Need number three,—sleep! Need number four,—good substantial food! Need number five,—more sleep! Need

number six,—more substantial food! Time enough after all this to get at the spiritual aspect of the case. God is an expert psychologist!

The Christian worker frequently faces the two horns of a dilemma. Shall he wear out? Or shall he rust out? It is well to advocate the middle ground, and that is necessary on general principles. But there come times when a Christian is called upon to spend freely of vital energy that a worth-while thing may be accomplished. Few Christians need cautioning not to overdo. But when the challenge of a great cause demands it, the unstinted expense of nerve force is as heroic as to spill life blood on the field of battle. Indeed, the battlefield reflects a glory and the soldier shares in it. But the hero of nerve-shock has to drag on, misunderstood, suffering from perverted ideas and delusions, and God only knows the hells that loom up on every side. Is it indeed a disgrace to spend and be spent nervously, whereas it is honour to spend and be spent in action? May the God who made nerves and heavy loads come to the rescue!

Elijah was wise enough to get away in time. A short rest, abundant food, then farther away to the mountain of revelation where God wished to speak to him. And now the time is ripe for spiritual ministry, and we detect the note of fatherly sympathy as the voice comes "What doest thou here, Elijah?" There is a strange note in Elijah's reply. It is not the note of one taunting the priests of Baal on their failure. It is the note of a nervous, heart-sick man who sees things all wrong. "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." Then the tender rebuke and encouragement,—"I have yet seven thousand in Israel

who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Out of doors and away with God under the open sky is a great place to get things rightly related.

2. Where Not to Look For God

The mountain of revelation is significant quite as much for what it does not reveal as for what it does reveal. It is quite essential that we learn what to expect and from what source to expect it. It is an error to confuse revelation with the noisy and spectacular. That was what Elijah had to learn. How often we seek to determine the channel and manner by which the sought-for revelation is to come! God will not listen to dictation. If we are quite sure that God will manifest himself in a given way we may be very sure that it will not come that way at all. Elijah undoubtedly wanted something uniquely spectacular,—something on which his senses might rest and himself be thus reassured. So God tried him. A great wind, so strong as to rend the mountains, passed by, but God was not in the wind. Nor was that the last occasion when a great wind was tried and found to be lacking in the presence of God. Sacred oratory and profuse volubility are not the certain attendants upon the Divine presence. After the wind came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. The test of the divine presence in a community upheaval is not in the upheaval, but in the after-results. Many a revival campaign is associated with a great stirring and commotion, but there is little of divine presence in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. This surely must have been a disappointment to Elijah. Had he not, by the fire test, proved that Jehovah was God? And now, God is not in the fire? Passion may be a conveyance of the divine presence, but it is not identical with it. We repeat, it is

quite important that we learn where not to look for God.

But the casuist will ask: "Is not God omnipotent?" True, this is a fundamental article of our faith. How then can one predict where God will not be found? The finding of God must be independent of outside means. Idolatry arises with the fixing or localizing of the divine presence. Superstition is naught but the elevation of the means. The exaltation of a rite or a method is closely akin to the reverence for a fetish or an amulet. God's people must differentiate and discover that God is not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. Yet the strange thing is that when we have really discovered "the secret place of the Most High" we can see Him also in wind and fire and earthquake. An interesting study in psychology!

The proper balance between the use of channels venerated by the ceremonialist and the spiritual apperception that is independent of set means, is indeed a worthy undertaking for the friend of the race. God is not in the earthquake, yet God is in the earthquake. God is not in the wind, yet God is in the wind. God is not in the fire, yet God is in the fire. God is not in the oratory, the commotion, and the passion of religious excitement. Yet God's presence has an oratory of its own. It tends to turn things and men upside down and inside out. And it is attended by a fire that burns but does not consume. A proper equalization of dependence and independence of means will result in the harmonizing of the most diverse elements in organized Christianity. Where is the middle ground upon which Romanist and Protestant may stand, neither losing what is of worth, but each gaining from the other what he has to contribute? The crucifix may be a means of grace. The living Christ may be apperceived without the material reminder. Art windows and sacred music may be a means of grace, yet the soul

may get closer to God with the light falling through turning leaves, and with the birds singing their eternal carols of praise. Whatever the means, the divine presence is the desideratum and that obtained, the means are unimportant.

3. The Eternal Revelation

"And after the fire a still small voice." The Hebrew says: "The sound of a soft whisper." Don't you like that? How can a voice be still and yet be alive? How can it be small and be still, and yet be anything? But the sound of a soft whisper is significant. The whisper shows a closeness of fellowship and understanding. There is something confidential about it. There is a love-note in its breathing. Elijah came away from the mountain of decision, and wandered for many days in the wilderness, seeking to find God. And when he found Him he learned that He had been with him all of the time.

A dissertation on the mysteries of revelation would be tedious. But a right approach to the subject will clarify much mistiness. The revelations to Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, and all the others were necessarily subjective. If the inner ear is open the divine voice can be heard in the purling of the brook or the rustle of the leaves. If the heart be pure the divine presence can be detected at every turn. Isaiah stood in the temple and saw the Lord high and lifted up. It is questionable whether we would have seen anything had we stood by his side. John the Baptist saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending like a dove and abiding on Jesus. We probably would have seen nothing. John, in Patmos Isle, saw the glorified Christ, heard the melodies of the chorus around the throne, saw the New Jerusalem coming down as a bride adorned for her husband. But had we been there we probably would have heard naught

but the lapping waves, and have seen naught but an old man wrapt in contemplation and prayer.

The record of revelation is enclosed in the Bible. The revelations had been awaiting the seeing eye since man began. The last page of the New Testament has not closed the revelations of God. God is looking for seers in the modern day,—and who can say who will be acclaimed as prophets in a coming age? The record of past revelation is of value only insofar as they enable us to recognize present revelations. Creed can not be bound down by a record of the past. Life is larger than logic, and life is the standard of orthodoxy. A faith determined and confined to the ideas of yesterday is moribund. More vitality in our faith would mean more faith among the living.

How variously the "sound of the soft whisper" comes to us! One prophet hies him away to the desert place where the inner voice may speak without restraint. He sees the evils and oppressions, the injustices and indignities of life, but withal he sees a better day coming, and we say he is divinely inspired. Another, no less a prophet, enters the realm of spirit and catching the significance of material forms blends them in such a way as to portray to the eye the destiny of a soul. We call him an artist. Is his revelation less authentic? Is his prophecy less real? He, too, has heard the sound of a soft whisper. And another catches the hint of celestial melody, and thus another type of revelation is transmitted from God to man. When will we see that all that reveals the inner things of the soul that make us godlike are indeed divine revelations? When will we hear the divine voice in the thousand whispers of the still small voice as it breathes through the soul of varitalented man? The aeolian harp is a symbol of the soul. All strings are not alike. But the zephyrs breathe upon

the strings and the gentle murmur as of a dream of forgotten music steals upon the air. Or the storms sweep the strings with magic fingers and throw upon the atmosphere vast volumes of grand oratorios. Shall we say that the "g" string gives a revelation, while the "a" string does not? It takes the whole in crescendo or in diminuendo to express the mind of the divine composer. All, all,—whatever its nature and degree,—that aids in expressing the divine thought, or revealing the divine purpose, is as truly inspired a revelation as the lines which fell from David's pen, or the words which fell from the lips of Paul.

Moreover, the possibility confronts every soul of receiving and imparting revelation. If the Master was the word become flesh, we, too, are words become flesh,—at least words in the forming. Each life a message! Each soul accessible to the divine presence. Each spirit transparent to the light of the Spirit divine. Each ear open, attentively and lovingly, to the sound of the soft whisper! And the day ultimately dawns when that soft whisper resounds louder than the roar of factory, the boom of cannon, or the sound of a rushing mighty wind. It sounds like the voice of many waters.

4. Back to the Paths of Duty

It is always a difficult thing to come down to the humble duties and commonplace things of life after an experience of rare wonder and revelation. But duties have to be performed. It is not enough to see the heavenly vision. That vision must be obeyed. Elijah cannot tarry on the mountain of revelation. The kingdoms of Syria and Israel must be cared for. Kings must be anointed to rule over them. And a successor to Elijah must be found, for the time draws near when another back must wear the prophetic mantle. So down

from the mount of revelation! "Anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, Jehu over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in Thy stead."

It is just here that so much religious purpose is abortive. It is confined to satisfying the appetite for new and more delectable experiences. The usual prayer of the prayer-meeting for God to send forth His Spirit could well be reduced to the desire for another pious thrill. Any thought of its application to the solution of problems is foreign to the mind. The public worship is regarded as an end in itself, instead as a means to an end. Let us have done with the word "service" in this connection. The minister serves, and the choir and organist serve, the janitor serves, and the ushers serve. But the rest of the people are at table, waiting on themselves, or being waited on. Food is not primarily for enjoyment, but for strength, and strength for service. Revelations are not mere "chunks of glory" for the soul to enjoy. They are for inspiration for larger service. But we shall meet this thought again.

Duty! There is an unpleasant sound about the word. It savours of clipped wings and high fences. It implies the compulsory expenditure of strength and vitality where the heart is not interested. It becomes a species of slavery. But duties persist. They will not down. We have our choice as to how to meet them, but meet them we must. We may refuse to do them, and self-respect is lost, manhood is dissipated, visions die out and self and sin become the moulders of our characters. Or we may meet them with courage and determination. We do not read that one will necessarily rejoice in the unpleasant duty. But one may rejoiee in the quality of soul that will not flinch at duty. The wonderful character of the Christ is seen in his steadfastly setting his face to go to Jerusalem. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross and despised the

shame." In its right aspect duty is but the steep and hard ascent to mountainous character and vision.

"Do thy duty, that is best;
Leave unto thy Lord the rest."

We descend from the mountain of revelation with the consciousness that we have been here before. It is familiar ground. Each mountain has been a mountain of revelation. All revelations have been different, like the varying faces of the diamond. But it is the same diamond. And we are likewise discovering that duty is a result of revelation, and the antecedent to further revelation. God is about us at every turn. Only the pure in heart can see Him, but He is there waiting for the seeing eye and the hearing ear. God does not repeat His revelations because the subjects vary and the conditions change. But whether it be on Mount Sinai or in New York, whether in the tenth century B. C. or in the twentieth century A. D. He is the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. As various as humanity and circumstances are the revelations of that mercy. Rest for wearied bodies, tired nerves, aching hearts, tempted souls,—all awaits to be revealed. But the revelations depend upon receptive faith and submissive channels. The stream of life flows to human hearts from the throne of God, but the channel is confined to human lives through which contact between the human and divine may be established. The Holy Spirit is the supreme revealer. "The water that I shall give you shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Thank God that this artesian well spills over and thirsty souls can drink. And because the purest water comes from springs in the mountain heights, so the mount of revelation becomes the place of the fountain of waters of life. It is pretty close to the throne of God.

XI

A MOUNTAIN OF DEFENSE

2 Kings 6:13-23

THE mountain we are to climb to-day belongs to a series of spiritual heights, a range whose topography is confined to the realm of sanctified imagination. Bunyan spoke of the range as the Delectable Mountains. It is one with the mountains of peace, of holiness, and of joy. But who is to say that the mountain is less real because it is not to be identified with any known to the geography of Palestine? If the mountains which faith is to remove and cast into the sea are mountains of a spiritual character, why may not the heights of glory become more real the less material they are? Our world is a thought world, and a spiritual world. Only in part does the material and the real for us overlap. It is here we begin to walk in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Elijah has returned to mystery as strangely as he came. The poet, in endeavouring to explain the wonder of it all, could think of no better metaphor than a chariot and horses of fire. Some day in glory we shall understand. There was occasion for the gift of the prophet's vision to discern the spiritual manner of his going. Undoubtedly, had we been present our slow wit would have seen nothing but the disappearance of an old man. How wonderfully the Bible treats of the glory of the home-going of God's saints! Enoch walked with God, and he was not, —for God took him. Moses went into the mountain of death, and God buried him. Elijah passes out and nothing less than horses of fire can transport him to glory. A fiery man, challenging deity to the test of fire, goes home

in his proper environment. Let us not be too rigid and logical. Religion loses much unless imagination has a bit of free rein. And Elijah has gone.

It is hard to fill a good man's place. Indeed it cannot be filled. Men may substitute and provide a welcome change, but the world is always poorer when great men die. Elijah is a different specimen from Elisha. We cannot say that the change was not needed. Elijah had done his work, and the task in hand demanded a different man. Elisha comes to the front, more mystical, less fiery; more gentle and diplomatic, less rugged. We confess to a bit of disappointment in Elisha. He doesn't quite measure up! If the episode wherein forty-two youngsters were devoured of bears, because of their ridicule of Elisha's bald head, be authentic,—while we recognize the importance of inflicting some just penalty upon such levity, we really feel that Elisha went too far. It was unfortunate! We confess to a disappointment. Not even the restoring of another woman's son, nor the raising of an axe-head can quite make up for it. But, it cannot be helped. Standards vary, and we would not betray our own littleness by an unjust criticism.

It is in Elisha's company we ascend the mount of defense. But hold, we do not ascend it. We only gaze upon it. It is a mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire. Were they literal horses? Were the fiery chariots not rather symbolic? In these days of tanks and armoured cars it is a bit difficult to think of the defenses of heaven being so antiquated. Yet, possibly even so, they have more power to determine the welfare and destiny of nations than all the modern equipment of war. The arrows of the Lord are sharper than steel. The chariots of the Lord are swifter than aeroplanes. The thunderbolts of God are farther carrying and more powerful than the projectiles known to modern military

science. We can leave it with the Lord. No battle in which God has engaged has failed for lack of modern equipment.

We are interested in the young man who accompanied Elisha. We cannot but sympathize with his dismay. What odds have two men against horses and chariots and a great host that encompass the city? He was an empiricist. His mind was susceptible to impressions from actual experience. He had no previous experience to mitigate his fear. It looked vary bad. If providence is on the side of the stronger battalions, then there is n hope for Elisha and the young man. No,—that is incorrect. Providence is on the side of the strongest battalions, and hence was on the side of the prophet and his servant. Elisha had the insight that was needed. "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." With all his disappointments, Elisha can still teach us a bit.

1. When God Gets a Chance

There is an old saying that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." It is true to-day and it has always been true. God cannot do very much when independent and self-satisfied humans persist in getting in His way and gumming things up. The times of greatest leanness are often the times of greatest growth and gain. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." We believe that here lies the secret of all the greatness of God's great souls. They came to the place where they threw all upon God. They made the great venture. They stepped out by faith, not knowing, but believing that God was there. We bemoan our fate when brought to extremity, but let us have done with bemoaning. Rather let us rejoice, for now God has a chance! The turning point of a life comes when it is "faith" or "failure."

We pride ourselves on being "labourers together with God," but underneath much of our thought is still much of the old idea of "salvation by works." We still look for rewards for service well done. The danger lies in the failure to remember that "when we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants." Much of our consecration is based on the thought, "I will do my best for Him." We pray for divine re-enforcements,—but have little thought of yielding the scepter. Jesus comes in as a helper, rather than as King.

We have devout reason for thanksgiving for the experiences that bring us empty handed and naked, impoverished in all but faith in the goodness and greatness of God. Not until then do we come to know God. Our minds are too absorbed with ourselves, our thoughts and plans. But when God begins to grow upon the soul, and one can say "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," life really begins at just this point. Three outstanding experiences have unfolded this truth to the writer. While a student, he was stricken by an illness that threatened his life. For thirty months the battle waged. In hours of pain and depression, it seemed that in spite of all he would catch up with the long black wagon. Life seemed so desirable! Prospects were encouraging, fond relationships were multiplying. Unforgettable is the Sabbath morning, after a night of worried tossing, when at four o'clock, we arose and knelt, the little bride and I, and laying claim to the promise, staid there until peace and assurance broke in upon the soul. The promise?

"Because he hath set his love upon me,
Therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.
With long life will I satisfy him,
And show him my salvation."

Again, in the performance of evident duty, it was necessary to defy a power within the church, whose influence sought to be restrictive and was only baneful. Fear clutched at the heart-strings. It was our first city pastorate, and the very home in which we lived did not belong to the church. To defy meant the elimination of a large support from the congregation. To acquiesce meant suffocation and spiritual enslavement. There seemed no way clear other than to throw all on God. With faith seldom equalled in life's experience, again we laid hold on the promise.

"Fret not thyself because of evil doers,
Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity;
For they shall soon be cut off,
And wither as the green herb.
Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,
And lean not to thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he shall direct thy paths."

We emerged from the experience, and incidentally from that pastorate of one year, with victory in our hearts. We had trusted God and had been approved. And in the later days when the burdens had accumulated, and the strain been overgreat, we have been brought low to the foot of the throne, and the words of comfort divine in which we saw light and hope were these,

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper:
And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.
This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord,
And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

Thank God that

"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed;
But my kindness shall not depart from thee,
Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,
Saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

These three experiences stand out as moments of scaling new heights in the experience of the grace of God.

They are worth more than hours of pleasure in which the soul was lulled to sleep. We come to understand Toplady's lines:

"If on a quiet sea,
Toward heaven we calmly sail,
With grateful hearts, O God, to thee,
We'll own the favouring gale.

But should the surges rise,
And rest delay to come,
Blest be the tempest, kind the storm,
Which drives us nearer home.

Soon shall our doubts and fears
All yield to thy control;
Thy tender mercies shall illume
The midnight of the soul.

Teach us, in every state,
To make thy will our own;
And when the joys of sense depart,
To live by faith alone."

2. *The Vision of the Open Eye*

So much depends upon what we see, and how clearly we see it. The difference between terror and courage was the difference between the closed and the open eye. The young man was dismayed at the encompassing hosts of Syria until he looked and, behold! the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire. It is important that we cultivate the faculty of seeing the invisible. This was the secret of Moses' endurance. It was the secret of Paul's endurance.

"For these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal."

Well may the prophets of the modern day repeat the prayer of Elisha,—"Lord, open the young man's eyes that he may see." Would to God that all the Lord's people

were prophets! One of the benefits to follow the outpouring of the Spirit was the gift of the open eye. The young men would see visions! Woe betide the race when her young men fail to see visions! What if the visions are occasionally roseate? What if few of them are ever fully realized? No stone castle has been built unless there was first a castle in the air. No temple has ever arisen except there was first a pattern shown in the mount.

We have referred to Moses who endured as seeing him who is invisible. Let us revert to it again. The shallow literalist remarks that it is impossible to see the invisible. The invisible is that which cannot be seen. How, then, can that which cannot be seen become visible? But experience laughs at impossibility. We behold a building, but what we see is not the stone and brick, but the spiritual idea which it embodies. We behold a painting, but what we see is not the pigment but the spirit of the artist. The babe or the savage looks without seeing the invisible, while staring at the page of learning. But the scholar who sees the same lines and marks, sees the soul of a Virgil or a Homer rising from the dead page, and he lives in other years and other climes. Helen Keller is blind, but of the most profound insight into truth. She has vision that sees the invisible. And no life has succeeded except to the degree to which the unseen has unfolded before the inner vision.

It was by faith that Moses saw the invisible. Faith and vision go hand in hand, even as credulity and ghosts go hand in hand. The latter is but the perversion of the former. And faith beholds the house that is to be rising from the smoking embers of the house that was, while unbelief sees but twisted girders and charred rafters. But the soul of faith acquires three results from its vision of the invisible. Transformation of character results from the vision, as with unveiled face we behold as in a glass,

the reflected glory of the Lord. Endurance likewise follows. There is nothing that parenthood cannot endure, that patriotism cannot endure, that martyrdom cannot endure when the vision bursts on the soul. And with transformation and endurance comes power. That arm is doubly nerved which obeys the seeing eye.

The possibilities of glimpsing the invisible are challenging. What electricity has made real in the realm of hearing, may be paralleled by some agency science has not yet discovered in the field of optics. No more miraculous and incredible are the possibilities of seeing the invisible than were the possibilities of hearing the inaudible. The advent of the wireless has transformed the life and thought of the world in a single generation. Long since, has the Holy Spirit revealed in prophetic vision, things which are impossible to describe, and unlawful to utter. May not science yet discover the means whereby not only the distant scene may be brought near, but the spiritually visible may be made physically visible as well? However, we are not dependent upon science for the faculty of spiritual sight. It is a fruit of the Spirit's baptism. When a party of friends may gather in a small room and hear with distinctness the melodious notes of a soprano solo, four hundred miles away, or the harmonies of an orchestra two hundred miles away, or the words of a sermon from some other distance, what may not the future bring forth in the field of the open eye? All depends upon the possession of an instrument, having that instrument in proper condition, and properly keyed. And while the few are thus privileged, the multitudes living within equal distance from the things transpiring go on their blissful way, ignorant of any such wonders taking place about them.

Enough has been said under the caption of revelation to make the point that it is only the seeing eye that is

needful. What would we not behold were our eyes less dim? We too would behold the mountains filled with horses and chariots of fire. We would see the common mountain shrubbery aflame with God. We would see Jehovah high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple. We would see the New Jerusalems descending to earth as a bride adorned for her husband. Blindness in part hath surely befallen Israel. We grope blindly in the face of chaos and confusion. We see clouds and mist where we might behold angel faces and spiritual powers of hope and victory. Like Paul, we need to have the scales fall from our eyes. We see through a glass darkly, instead of face to face. We hear thunder where we might detect the Father's voice. There is nothing like trouble to bring us to the place where faith will open blind eyes and make them see.

3. The Battle-field of the Saints

The world's battle-fields provide a never failing topic of interest. Waterloo, Gettysburg, Bunker Hill, San Juan and Vimy Ridge, are all significant. We are accustomed to say that such and such a national or world interest was decided here. But we have ignored the real battle-field of the saints.

We are surrounded by the spiritual. We dwell in the midst of powers and agencies that are spiritual. Not that the defining of the term is any more comprehensive, but the powers are there. We may not be able to postulate personality to these powers. There is something mysterious and elusive about them. But they give evidence of rare intelligence. The prince of the powers of the air was no fiction to the Master. The prince of this world had nothing in common with him.

Modern intelligence might have to revise the angelology of the ancients, but this is by no means proved.

Psychology is still in its infancy. The realm of the spirit is proved, but we have only touched its edge. Out beyond lies the entire realm of forces, powers, agencies, intelligences, personalities which may have a more decisive influence on life than the pragmatist may grant. What we know as natural law may be but spiritual intelligence in a peculiar operation. Who can discount a form of Christianized pantheism with full consent of his intelligence? Paul believed in the realm of the spirit. We may take it for granted and await further revelations as to its nature and extent.

He who believes in prayer believes that the realm of spirit is the real battle-ground of the saints. It is here we wage war against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. It is here we join hands with God for the accomplishment of His plans as against the forces of ill. If the mountains are filled with chariots and horses of fire, we have every reason to know that the valleys are likewise covered with other powers working for human destruction. To these forces are traceable the evils of premature death, the broken hearts, the broken faith, the terror and despair of wounded and fearful hearts. Real prayer enters the spirit realm, and the harder the prayer, the more persistent is the effort of faith. We may need to revise our demonology from a philosophical standpoint, but experimentally we know that the theory has a practical working basis.

It is easy enough to reduce the spirit realm to imagination. It is quite the fashion so to do in learned circles, especially as relates to the forces of evil. But the rule would work equally in the realm of the good. Scepticism has no valuable contribution to offer toward the solution of the world's moral problems. It maintains at best a cynical neutrality, but for the most part it degenerates to a camouflage for immoral conduct.

The ideas of childhood may be recalled with a degree of satisfaction. Angels watched over us then. Strange, but the Bible seems to believe in angels. Hearken,—

> "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
> They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Paul seemed to believe in them. The angel of the Lord stood by him in the night before the shipwreck. Jesus seemed to believe in them, for after his temptation, and after his agony in Gethsemane angels came and ministered to him. We wonder if our psychological cock-sureness has altogether improved our moral victoriousness. God restore to us so much of childhood's faith as we need for moral conquest!

It is significant that Paul recognized the spirit realm as that in which battles were waged and victories gained. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may stand in the evil day.—Withal praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." Our parents sang with faith, a song of spiritual victory,—

> "Come, come angel band;
> Come and around me stand:
> O bear me away on your snowy wings
> To my eternal home."

A faith in spiritual powers, intelligent and personal, helpful as well as harmful, would regalvinize the church and bring back the day of conquest in Jesus' name.

4. A Christian's Vengeance.

Elisha was a man of great spirit. In an age when the *lex talionis* was recognized as both natural and legitimate he understood and practiced the law of the kingdom, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." The

hosts that had encamped against him were providentially afflicted with blindness until the prophet had caused them to lose their way, and then after their creature wants were supplied, they were allowed to proceed on their way, with sight restored.

Heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head! What sport that would be! Coals of fire burn. They have an uncomfortable feeling when applied to any part of the body. Dust and ashes on the head is a sign of repentance and humility. That is where we would all like to see our enemies. Dust and ashes! And the vindictive spirit wishes that a few live coals might be in the ashes and burn that head good and proper. Not many, of course, but just a few live ones. Hostility merits a comeback. Justice demands reparation. He has made us suffer. Now he should suffer. Alright! Let us not be content with a few live coals. While we are doing it, let us do a good job. Let us heap them up. Let us give full swing to our vengeance! The enemy expects retaliation. It would justify him to himself if we pay him in kind. Let us do the unexpected. If he hunger, let us feed him. If he thirst, let us quench his thirst, for in so doing, we shall have the very sweetest and most thorough vengeance possible. The thing to do with an enemy is to conquer and kill him. We will do it. We will overcome evil with good. We will kill the enmity that makes the enemy, and in his place will be a friend. This is the logic and philosophy of the kingdom. Who shall say that it is mistaken?

Our souls, earth-bound, move heavily toward this spiritual ideal. With all our profession of faith and allegiance we still hesitate to test the suggestion of the Christ. Forgiveness is seldom unreservedly granted, and often least when confession is made. The other check, and the second mile retain their fellowship with the

"cloak also," and absent treatment characterizes our whole performance. We dodge the issue by insisting that the language is metaphorical, like that of washing the disciples' feet. We are to get the thought. No one expects us to obey the letter. That is just it. We do not get the thought, hence no one expects us to obey the letter. Couldn't experimenting humanity give this law of the kingdom a fair and honest trial? Everything else has been tried and has failed. Surely this is worth a trial. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Should God hear this prayer and take it as sincere, many of us would face eternity unforgiven. "So will your heavenly father not forgive you your trespasses, if ye forgive not every man his brother from his heart." Who are we to sit in judgment? Private concern but biases judgment. We must grant that very pardon for which our souls crave.

And so we turn away from the mountain of defense, thankful that our eyes too have beheld the mountain filled with horses and chariots of defense. And in the hour of trial let us remember that this mountain which seems indeed a mountain of difficulty is indeed the mountain whose sides are covered with celestial cavalry, ready to defend all whose trust is in Jehovah.

XII

A MOUNTAIN OF PEACE

Isaiah 2:2-4

IT IS a bit difficult to determine whether the mountain of peace has its location in the realm of the physical universe, or whether it belongs to the realm of sanctified imagination. If it is a mountain with geographical position it will be identified with mountains outside of the delectable range. It will be one with the mountain of sacrifice. But if its topography is imaginary it remains for a practical Christianity to make it geographically real.

The subject of peace has been of unusual interest for many years. Before the recent upheaval in Europe it occupied a prominent place in the hopes and dreams of nations, and with quickened intensity it seemed to become all but universal. Much was expected in the latter years of the Hague tribunal in settling amicably the disputes of nations. Even after the storm had burst, and while militarism was in the saddle, the desire for peace was universal and overwhelming. None longed for it more than they who were engaged in the conflict. And since hostilities have ceased, civilization has concentrated its attention on the effort to make peace perpetual.

Likewise the subject of peace is vitally related to the Christian faith. The word in its various forms appears upwards of five hundred times in Holy Writ. The theme of peace afforded the center about which both law and prophecy revolved. It embodied the idea of the Messianic kingdom. Its bearing was both human and divine. Peace with God necessarily preceded any last-

ing peace with man. And peace with man is the supreme desideratum in all lines of human activity and endeavour. It is therefore with unusual interest that we ascend the mountain of peace at this time. The peace conference is now debating the limitation of armaments. It is a theme worthy of the thought of student, religionist and statesman. It but shows how closely inter-related are the ideals of religion with the necessities of human life. The mountain of peace will be easier of ascent if we approach its summit by easy stages. Hence let us consider

1. *The Paths of Peace*

Among many scriptural texts which would afford profitable food for meditation are three. In the Book of Job, Eliphaz and Temanite exhorts Job as follows:

> "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace."

Whatever may be said of the conclusions to which Eliphaz's argument led him, his words in this connection contain a profound truth. Acquaintance with God is the first path of peace. Nations are at war because men do not know God. Men are at variance and strife because God is to them but a name instead of a personal acquaintance.

It hardly behooves us to ask if God can be known. Notwithstanding the logic of Herbert Spencer, God is not entirely the unknown and unknowable. One ounce of experience in acquaintanceship with God will disprove a ton of logic,—and logic is often quite weighty. The infinite must always transcend the comprehension of the finite. Yet we are not ignorant of the nature and meaning of space because it is infinite. All knowledge of distances presupposes a knowledge of space. God, indeed, cannot be known except in part. But the spiritual life of man,—indeed the eternal life of the soul,—is depend-

ent upon the knowledge of God. And millions have not only testified to the knowledge of God, but their lives have proved their contention. They could only be classified by saying that they walked with God.

The peacemaker is to be called a child of God. There is something mystic yet fundamental and vital in the association of acquaintance with God with the enjoyment of peace. It comes to mean "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Thus the important thing to discover is the path that leads to the "secret place of the Most High." This we find when we turn to the Book of Proverbs which will indicate the second path of peace.

The man of wisdom wrote concerning wisdom:

> "Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
> And all her paths are peace."

He had many excellent things to say about wisdom. She was more precious than rubies, and all the things one might desire were not to be compared with her. She was with God in the act of creation, and was his counselor. The youth to whom the writer addressed himself was exhorted to get wisdom, for she was his life. She would prove a chaplet of grace to him. A hasty return to college days brings to mind the chapel scene on almost any morning when the now beloved and venerable Charles F. Thwing was president and in charge. We always knew what to expect. There was a suggestion of rebuke in the fatherly admonition. It smote the freshman as being personally directed,—as no doubt it was so intended. But the oft-repeated phrase comes back,

> "Get wisdom, get understanding.
> Wisdom is the principal thing,
> Therefore get wisdom;
> Yea, with all thy getting, get understanding."

The past decade has taught us to differentiate between

the kinds of wisdom offered for public consumption. It is evident that it is not the wisdom of this world that is the path of peace. The nation with most learning, and most wise after a worldly sort, plunged the world into chaos and disorder. There is a wisdom that is not from above. It manifests itself in a rivalry of wits,—a contest that turns on smartness and subtle perception rather than upon wisdom of far and wide reach. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy."

It may seem but to travel in a circle to remind ourselves here that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But it is thus the path of wisdom converges with acquaintance with God. But we may talk to little advantage and quite miss the path that is called wisdom unless we approach it by means of "a new and living way,"—a personal way, one who called himself "the way." It was Christ who made acquaintance with God a possibility. It was he who so exemplified wisdom that he could speak of himself as "the truth." And it was he who said:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace give I unto you,—not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Thus the mountain of peace of Isaiah's vision is closely connected with other mountains which we will ascend in company with the Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." But let us postpone further consideration of him in this connection, and wait until we consider him as the Prince of Peace.

2. The Price of Peace

Again there are three texts to which prayerful attention may well be directed. Each has light to throw on

the price that precedes all peace. Said the prophet of Jehovah:

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee."

Concentration of thought on the will and way of Jehovah! This is a higher price than many are willing to pay. They want peace, but are unwilling to pay the price. It is all right and feasible to let the mind dwell occasionally, or semi-occasionally, on the fact and will of God! A pious thought or two is expected to work miracles. But such thoughts are only disturbing. They do not make for peace. There is a division of thought and sentiment, of heart and will. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and a man divided against himself is in a lamentable state. But if peace is worth having, it is worth the effort to concentrate. And the all-absorbing theme must be Jehovah in all His will and word and dealings with men.

Now the wise man in Proverbs had a sublime faith. We do not know how well founded it was. But he was a man of conviction, and he gave voice to his conviction. Let us at least listen to the price of peace as related by him.

"When a man's ways please the Lord,
He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

We submit to ourselves this suggestion as at least not disproved. It is a sad comment upon many of us. We are not at peace. We are not always, nor perhaps often, at peace with ourselves. Peace between friends is by no means regular and uniform. But peace with our enemies,—who expects it? And yet, who does not want it? Nietzsche could write "a man should be proud of his enemies," and there is something to be said for it.

But is life to be spent in strife and conflict? Are the animosities natural to temperamental differences and opposing view-points to be whetted to the cutting edge? Is there not a neutral zone in which lives may be lived, destinies wrought out, and strife abated? The wise man believed that there was such a zone. Note his qualification "when a man's ways please the Lord!" And the cynic confesses that this is equivalent to acknowledging that it is impossible.

We would be in bad straits were we left stranded here. Here is the predicament of humanity. "All have come short of the glory of God." "In thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." We see the vision, but are unable to make it real. If the law could have saved the race, Christ need never to have come. Somehow, neither here nor elsewhere, can we get away from him. And so we are not surprised to find listed with other items under the price of peace the item of Calvary. Hearken to Paul,

"Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

It is peace with God through the reconciling Christ. It was Calvary that stood out as God's supreme appeal to humanity to be reconciled to Him. And we would look at Calvary as a continued experience of a lifetime, but coming to culmination at this point. Much as we would prefer to dodge the issue, we cannot have peace with God without the incarnation and apart from the crucifixion. It is impossible from the standpoint of man's guilty soul. Nothing is said about impossibility from God's standpoint. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." And upon peace with God "peace and good will among men" is contingent.

But again we hasten, for we would note

3. The Program of Peace

And this we find in our text. Many wise men have written since Isaiah penned these lines, but they have not improved upon it. After twenty-five centuries the vision splendid stands out as yet unrealized and appearing to many as a beautiful but impracticable dream. Will swords ever be beaten to plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks? Will the time ever come when nation shall not rise up against nation, and men shall not learn war any more? The world waits to see. Can we blame it if it insists on being a bit skeptical?

First in this vision is the exaltation of the mountain of the Lord's house. This is equivalent to the exaltation of religion as grasped by the Lord's saints in all ages. There is no peace with God ignored. There is no peace when the finer instincts of the soul are neglected. There is no peace worthy of the name except in the shadow of the temple of God. Religion is not negligible, but indispensable. A mighty missionary movement is more potential for good than all the peace conferences and disarmament councils of the world's diplomatists. There is no peace without God. Let other mountains and hills be established and exalted. Everything in its right relation. But above them all the mountain of the Lord's house!

Next comes the necessity for change of heart. "He shall teach us his ways, and we shall walk in his paths." Enmity is not external, but internal. The personal devil may be philosophically embarrassing,—as indeed he has always proved,—most when appearing in the garb of an angel of light. But there is a spirit of hostility, of hatred, quite uniform in manifestation, that sets race against race, and man against man. Let the anthropologist trace his spirit back to savage ancestry if he will. The untoward effects of this presence are everywhere

felt. His headquarters are in the souls of men. These headquarters must be turned over to the rightful sovereign if peace is to come. Man does not naturally take kindly to the teachings of God, nor does he willingly and docilely walk in His paths.

Then comes the submission of all causes of dispute to the tribunal of God. "He will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples." There are two sides to every controversy,—God's side and man's side. The establishment of an international tribunal may be a problem to be worked out at length, but there would be no race strife, no class conflict, no religious discord if questions of controversy were submitted to the divine decision. Yes, we know that it is easy to be self-deceived, and that one can persuade himself that what he wants is God's will that he should have. But we are talking of the spirit illumined soul. And honesty will eventually disclose the divine will.

And not until all of this is accomplished will it be time for total disarmament. We venture to assume that until Christianity is exalted, hearts are changed, and problems submitted to divine decision the world is in a bad way. It is open to debate whether a nation or an individual is justified in being undefended. There is something to be said for the psalmist who blessed the Lord who had "taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight." There have been days when pugilistic ability was a decided means of grace. Nations as well as individuals can be thugs. Safety against thuggery lies in preparedness and the art of self-defense. Faith in divine protection requires common sense in self-preservation. People have been known to be decimated because their faith was not attended by works.

But the day of relief from the burdens of taxation and of slaughter is not merely the subject of a prophet's

fancy or a poet's dream. It is the day prophesied from earliest prophecy. It is the day in which God shall reign as King and Lord. The ravages of war have not been only the slaughtered youth. The lowering of morals, the engendering of hate, the collapse of ideals, the spirit of lawlessness,—all of these render the toll in lives the least of the evils of war. How the god of war sharpens the wits! Shall the God of peace prove less enlightening?

There is a temptation to go into ecstatic detail in contemplation of the program of peace. Its effect upon wars, upon strikes, upon rivalry and strife in commerce and social relationship is inexhaustible. But the libraries and magazines are full to repletion on this theme. The spirit of peace will make for peace, and of the increase and possibilities of the reign of peace there is no end. All that has thus far been said is but anticipatory. All leads by way of preparation to him who gives the mountain its name and its glory. We would contemplate as we may

4. The Prince of Peace

The fulfillment of all prophecy concerning peace depends upon the person large and great enough to accomplish the task. All visions require the personality of a great soul to make them less idealistic, and more real. Herein lies the essence of greatness. To see the vision and to make it a reality! Any realization of greatness must come by this path. The world has had enough of mere visions, what she needs is men who will not only catch the vision but dedicate the life to the vision's accomplishment. The prophets required the Christ. The kingdom of peace required the Prince of Peace.

The world will never hear enough about Jesus Christ. The pulpit will never exhaust this subject. The theme is as old as prophecy, its treatment as new and original

as the latest convert. The shortest sermon to which the writer has listened was an hour and forty-three minutes long. Bishop Bristol preached it. Eternal things are not measured by time. His theme was "Jesus." A dozen or more of lives of Christ stand on our book shelves. We are still waiting for someone to write the real life of Jesus! Writers despair when they try to depict him. Painters have never wearied of trying to transfer to the canvas a fleeting vision of his God-hood. Saints have been yielding themselves to his gracious Saviour-hood, and with souls ravished with joy admit that the half has never been told. Sinners of all shades, from blackest black to lightest gray, have found in him an inexhaustible mine of treasure. What can this poor pen add that will bring him before us?

We might picture him in his earthly career, surrounded by peasant companions and disciples, followed by sweaty multitudes, feeding the hungry and healing the sick. We might picture him in glory, borrowing from the pen of the Revelator on Patmos Isle. But any picture must be inadequate. Let us glimpse him in but a very few of his assumptions of princely power as a bringer of peace.

First we hear him uttering strange words for a prince of peace: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I am come not to send peace but a sword." Sensitive souls quiver with apprehension at the apparently harsh words. There is but one way to have peace,—the right way. There can be no peace with unchecked evil threatening hearts and homes. The pacifist in the face of peril is possessed of a streak of yellow. Peace can stand permanent only on a basis of eternal rightness. The world is not constituted to that end. There must be a cutting out before there can be a building up. Christ came to send a sword among men.

But there is a difference between swords. There are swords that kill, and there are swords that heal. The Revelator saw him with a sharp, two-edged sword proceeding from his mouth. Peter evidently misunderstood that reference to swords, for he blundered a bit in his defense of his Lord. But it was a blunder which we find it easy to pardon. We wonder a little if that sword he came to send,—a healing sword, a sharp, two-edged sword,—was not the sword of which Paul wrote? What more fitting could proceed from his mouth, in the nature of a sword, than "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God?" Let it stand. The Prince of Peace is a warrior bold, wrestling, attacking, combating sin of every form and fashion. We do not find him fighting humanity, but saving humanity. Yet the entrance of his word into human society has evoked all the unrighteous wrath of the evil one. Families have been divided, and nations have been destroyed in his wrath. But the Prince of Peace has persisted on his course of establishing an enduring and righteous peace.

Again we see him illustrating the peace he came to establish. It has been a trying day, and the faithful few take shipping across the petulant Sea of Tiberius. He falls asleep in the stern of the boat. The storm bursts in fury, but he calmly sleeps on. He is safe. It is his Father's storm. It is his Father's sea. He is his Father's son. He is weary and needs rest. Why worry? God will take care of him. But the disciples are *holigopistoi*,—men of little faith. They have not yet come to know God. "Master, save, or we perish!" Then the regal act of the prince of the kingdom of peace,—"Peace, be still!" and the wind and waves obey him. Were this an ordinary man we would discredit the account, and doubt the accuracy of the source. But we can believe anything good of this man!

We see him in his capacity of Prince of Peace in the upper room. Two things mark this hour with his disciples. There was a pacific deed and a pacific word. The deed was on this wise. There had been contention among the disciples. Ambition is always a disturber of the peace. There were dusty and weary feet to be cleansed, but no slave to perform the menial task. Pride and indignation had shut up the bowels of compassion of these irritable men. The pacific act was the kingliest act the other side of the cross. The Prince of Peace appeared in regal glory, girdled with a towel, and his badge of royalty a basin of water! Peace was brought to the group as it could not otherwise have come. Then the pacific word as the hour sped. The shadow of the cross was falling over his spirit. To-morrow the little flock would be scattered and torn. Hope would be destroyed, and the sun would disappear from their sky! A princely proclamation of the victory of peace! "Let not your heart be troubled. Have faith in God. Have faith also in me." No night so dark as to justify the abandonment of faith. God still reigns supreme. Peace is coming triumphant. Have faith! "Peace I leave with you. My peace give I unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." It is an inner peace in the midst of conflict, a peace based on faith. It is a peace that passeth all understanding, hence all defining. And as their eyes rested on his calm, yet wearied, face they thought they could dare anything for him!

We see him again in the most regal act of his reign. He hangs on the cross, with a repentant thief at his side. His rule is still the rule of peace. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise!" And peace steals into the soul that has known little peace since the career of

crime began. How like it was to that other bestowment of peace to the soiled creature dragged before him,—"Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." Surely Paul could emphasize the peace with God through such an atoning saviour. Nor was this all. The vision of such an atoning Christ was adapted to Jew and Gentile. All nations could see in him the lamb slain for their peace. And in a common consciousness of sin and of a saving grace he became the peace between men, making them one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition between them.

We take a far glance and we see him in different attire and differently exercising his office. He is seated on a white horse. His eyes shine with the reign of peace as a flame of fire. Upon his head are many diadems. He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood,—his own and not the blood of men. And on his garment is his name written,—King of Kings and Lord of Lords. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ." Powers hostile and demonic have been put to rout. Principalities and powers, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places, have suffered defeat. Peace reigns, because the Prince of Peace has overcome the world.

How empty are mere words! Are they given us as a cloak with which to conceal thought? Who can properly describe the king in his beauty? We feel that we can but mar such a picture in attempting to describe it. But the glorious fact remains,—the Prince of Peace is not a past figure in history. His day is not waning. His reign is but coming. In devious ways and by myriad paths he is coming, coming more and more to the place of rule and victory. "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

We shall return to climb other mountains with this Prince of Peace. Perhaps we have run ahead of the march in touching upon the victory of peace. Even so, we shall be much heartened for the harder stretches we must climb. And as we proceed may there ring in our ears the words with which he comforted his chosen ones,—"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

XIII

A MOUNTAIN OF HOLINESS

Isaiah 11:1-9

FROM the mountain of peace we turn to the mountain of holiness. It is with a degree of foreboding that we undertake this ascent. We have heard much of this mountain, and now we are at its foot. But a few have been known to hesitate to attempt the climb, lest its heights should prove unattainable. Some have descended who have claimed to have reached its highest height, but there is a something about them that has made men wonder if the height were worth climbing. And others have come back from some regions in this mountain, with faces shining, but with voices hushed as having beheld things unlawful for a man to utter. We have a strong conviction that it is these of shining face and few words who have reached the height, rather than the others. Let us not be fearful, but accept the new height as a challenge. We are made of the stuff of which adventurers are made.

As we view the mountain in anticipation of the ascent, we discover that we are on familiar ground. There has always been something of the mountain of holiness in the geography of Methodism. It is on this mountain the Methodist temple has been built. We will have to pigeonhole such histories and testimonies as have an uncertain ring. We will have to admit that the summit of this mountain is not easy of approach. Indeed it may be that we will scarce be able to reach its utmost height. But let us remember that the whole mountain is holy, and it is a good place on which to dwell. Let us aim to reach its heights, not as mere adventurers, but as seekers after

truth and life, investigating and appreciating every phase of its grandeur.

A glance around reveals to us the fact that this mountain has been frequented for many years. A peculiar people have sojourned here, and a peculiar language has been spoken. The people have been noted for their visions and prayers. They have been a people of devotion to ideals, and of honesty of heart. They have left traces of their presence by the altars erected for worship and sacrifice. They have spoken the language of Canaan. We find carved on the rocks of this mountain the name of Enoch, and of Abraham, of Moses and of Elisha. We wonder if Elijah was not familiar with its topography, and if this were not the mountain where the Saviour went to pray? More recent names are spoken of as those of men who have made their abode here. We hear the mention of Francis and Savonarola, as of heroes of yore. The names of Wesley, of Fletcher, of Asbury, of Simpson and of Booth, dwell on many tongues. The archaeologist has been busy and has recovered parchments which tell of soul struggles, of heart examinations, and of heavenly visions. And through the ages they prove to have been but men of like passions with us, but of unique and favoured experience.

The atmosphere of this mountain has a rareness of its own. One has a vague sense of breathing the odours of paradise. There is a suggestion of intoxication as one abandons himself to the inbreathing of the Spirit Who dwells in this mountain. Many splendid folk have looked up its sloping sides and have longed to dwell in this mountain and have not been bold enough for the venture. Others of meager intellect and of poor natural grace have boldly ventured forth and have risen to heights of surpassing life and experience. The mountain creates an aristocracy all its own.

Thus it is with a sense of utter unworthiness that we approach this mountain to-day. We have but one excuse in making the attempt. It is a divine challenge. We dare not fail or refuse. This is the hill of the Lord, and we who would know Him must find Him here. He will come far to meet us, but it is on this mountain we will come to know Him. Trusting in the faithfulness and power of Him in whose company we climb, let us make the ascent.

1. The Vision Beautiful; Will it Ever Come True?

The main reason for ascending to the mountain height is the glory of the unfolding vision. Mountain lying beyond mountain, rugged and strong, each with a glory of its own, until in the dim distance one sees what may be fact, or it may be fancy. One looks indeed into fairy-land. But let us not belabour the fairy-land seer. Who shall say that the forms seen in sunset or on mountain height as heaven touches earth, and forms become vague and prophetic is not the more real? For one, we must believe that the things that are visible to the natural eye are the less real, while the visions that unfold on the eye of the soul are the more real. It was thus the holy men of old caught the vague and indistinct outline of a person who was to come, and of a day that was to dawn. But in the fullness of times the vision became increasingly real.

Please observe the vision beautiful as it unfolds before the prophetic eye. It was first the vision of the Messiah, and then it was the vision of the Messianic order. All of this lay revealed before him who stood on the summit of the mountain of holiness.

Bit by bit the vision of the Messiah came. Like individual pieces they were handed down until in the fullness of times they were seen to belong together in a wonderful mosaic. One glimpsed him as a warrior, another as

a suffering servant, another as a monarch, and still another as a prophet. The occasion does not warrant an exhaustive study of the person of the Messiah as outlined by men of olden time. We can but glance at the few strokes of the lightning artist who would leave an impression we must not forget. He shall come forth, a shoot out of the stock of Jesse. Royalty is there, because he is of the Davidic line. But humbleness is there for nothing is here said of David, but rather of his farmer father. His prevailing characteristic will be his possession of the Spirit of Jehovah. This Spirit has many manifestations, but it is one Spirit through them all. It is a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. It is much to be feared that many who have thought themselves to be established inhabitants in the mountain of holiness have never caught this vision. They think to know this person, but they have not seen that the Spirit of which they so loudly boast has so many various manifestations. One would sometimes think that they set a premium upon the lack of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of knowledge. They speak much of power, but the nature and object of that power is left in doubt. But we need not linger with them. Up and let us see the vision through the prophet's binoculars. This far off person thus brought so near is spirit baptized and spirit-possessed, but in a wonderfully sane and intelligent manner. We observe, too, that he has a distinctly social program to carry out. He is a person of unique judgment, for he does not judge by what the eye or ear reveals, but he judges with righteousness and equity. The day of the poor and the meek is about to dawn. Evil will not be compromised nor winked at. The vesture of his loins is the badge of his reign. Righteousness and faithfulness must be the key-note! This is

unique, and a distinctly new idea in the field of human government.

But there is likewise the vision of a new day. Here with poetic license and prophetic abandon, Isaiah undertakes to outline a few of the features of that day. Wild beasts and tame beasts will abide together in amity, and so gentle will be the spirit of the most ferocious that a little child shall lead them. Carnivorous animals will acquire a change of taste. Life will be sacred to man and brute. Innocency will not be in danger through ignorance. Venomous serpents will become safe companions. In all God's holy mountain there shall be no hurt nor destruction, for the knowledge of God will be universal.

Twenty-five centuries have come and gone. The world has waited for the fulfillment of this dream. Has the person arrived? Has the day dawned? Christendom answers "yes" to the first, and "no" to the second question. How long, O Lord, how long? Will the vision ever come true? And faith,—the faith that overcomes the world, answers "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We seek to convince ourselves that the day-dawn is nearer, that already we can see the streaks of grey lighting up the eastern sky. But the annual toll of human life and happiness is appalling. The brute creation is as nothing compared to the beasts in human form in their ravaging. For nineteen centuries the influence of Messiah has been felt in the earth, and his light has penetrated to the dark corners of the earth. Still the lands most pronounced in their profession of allegiance leave much to be desired in carrying out his program. Will the vision ever come true?

Were there but one who had caught the glimpse of the glory of God we might be led to doubt. But note this, that it is no mirage that is seen. All who have dwelt on this mountain of holiness have had a conviction explicable

only on the basis of actual vision of the coming day. The higher the altitude attained, the clearer the vision, though it must be confessed that the seer has not always known clearly whether it lay in the realm of the physical or the spiritual world. Like the vision of the New Jerusalem, its earthly scene has sometimes been forgotten in its heavenly nature. But the prophets have seen and have passed their vision on. Their descriptions are not complete, but they piece together with wonderful precision. A careful study of present conditions compared with conditions in the past shows that in part the details of the vision are being made actual. We have a foundation for our faith in what the studious mind actually beholds. From Balaam to John, the vision of the Messianic day has been unfolded until one must blunt his spiritual sensibilities, and do violence to his truest self to doubt that some day the vision beautiful will become actual.

According to the word of one of these dwellers on the mountain top the privilege of seeing the heavenly vision is possible to all the people of God. It but needs that the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon all flesh, and youth everywhere will see more or less distinctly the possibilities of the kingdom of Christ in the social realm.

2. Hark! The Jingle of Bells!

From the heights of the mountain of holiness sounds can be heard coming up from the valley below. The clear air bears the sound with a distinctness that is heartening. Once there dwelt a seer on the mountain of holiness and as he listened as well as looked, he caught the jingle of bells. They were not church bells, nor school bells. We rather associate holiness with such bells as these. But they were bells on the horses, as back and forth through street and over field they ran. And on these bells was written "holiness unto the Lord." Even the common

things would be recognized as having a distinct bearing upon religion. The sovereignty of God would be universal.

Possibly this is a good time to note what is that peculiar character which makes a thing holy. Much confusion, often piously engendered and ignorantly reared, has obtained here. And we discover that in fact holiness has a simple origin, but a wonderful destiny. The mountain of holiness begins on a level with things common and not distinctly sacred. Here are two buildings, made of identical material. One is holy, the other not. Here are two vessels, made of the same material and according to the same pattern. One is holy, the other not. Here are two garments, alike in every detail. One is holy, the other not. Wherein lies the distinction? In the use to which they are put. Here are two men, of like mental and physical condition, with equal possibilities and opportunities. One is a holy man, because he recognizes himself as belonging exclusively to God. The other is either not holy, or only partially holy, because he does not belong to God completely,—possibly not at all. Primarily, holiness is a matter of dedication and acceptance. On this broad basis men have been called saints whose actual development left much to be desired.

But in the matter of personalities another law operates. We assume characteristics resembling what we admire. Love to God in dedication means both inner and outer obedience. The dedicated man becomes increasingly a God-like man. There will be fluctuations according to the keenness of his sight and comprehension. But one day that man, if loyal and earnest, will catch a complete vision of the quality of God's holiness. He will perceive the requirements of spiritual maturity in the family of God. Henceforth a new law governs his life. He must be holy as God is holy. The purity, the kindness, the compassion,

the truth, the love, the righteousness of God make an insistent demand upon him. He recognizes how far he is from this ideal. But with a surrender that is complete, a devotion that is all inclusive, he adopts the ideal and by the help of God, sets himself to realizing this ideal. Many unideal remnants will appear in his life, but as he learns of them he will strive until they are likewise brought under the dominion of the Holy God. Like Paul, he will continually say, while climbing the mountain whose every rock spells holiness, but with eye fixed on the yet unattained height,—" I count not myself to have laid hold, but this one thing I do. Forgetting the things that are behind, and looking forward to the heights yet unattained I press on." It is " Excelsior " over again!

Holiness written on the bells of the horses! What can it mean? The jingle of bells and the vision beautiful belong together. Won't it be glorious when business is run on a holy basis! Think of it,—buying groceries of a firm of which God is senior partner! Having the automobile repaired in a garage run on the principles of Christian stewardship! Either thought is sufficient to take away one's breath! Let the day come. It cannot come too soon. And associated with these bells in their musical tinkling, there come the sound of happy children's voices playing in the streets, and somewhere in the combined scene and sound we see old age in a graceful and radiant happiness, for at evening time it shall be light!

The thought persists in spite of faulty exegesis that there is a note of joy in the jingle and tinkle of bells,—especially bells of horses as they run. The heart lightens at the sound. It may be a warning, but it is a pleasing warning. And these bells ring in the interest of holy commercial and social community life. There is a vital association between the joy of the Lord, and the dedicating of life to His holiness. Holiness is not joyless. Nor

is the joy of a somber hue. Unhappiness never was holy. Holiness was never truly unhappy. The holiest Man in the hour of his greatest sorrow and suffering spoke much of the fullness of his joy. We will have our gloomy hours and days. Nerves, digestion, social maladjustment all enter in. But " the joy of the Lord " is the strength of His saints. Beloved, we sin if we rest content this side of that surrender to God in faith which makes us peculiarly His, and unfolds to us the treasures of His joy.

3. Higher Ground, and the Highest Height!

It is a tragedy when a soul becomes satisfied. Happy is the man whose soul is ever driven onward and upward with a divine discontent. Godliness with contentment is indeed great gain, but godliness with a craving that is forever unsatisfied will land a soul somewhere near the summit of the mountain of holiness.

What shall be said of the " rest that remaineth for the people of God?" Is life forever nothing but a striving? Is eternity to be consumed with insistent activity? Is there not some resting place where a soul may sit and cool off? Isn't there some more immediate goal where a spirit may satisfiedly preen his feathers, and call it a day's work? Yes, there are many such, and they are overcrowded. But they are made by human hands and for earthly clods. The soul born of God reiterates, " I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." And this is the token of celestial citizenship.

The mistake most common is the idea so oft indulged that holiness is a thing to be received like a parcel and worn like a garment. Rather is it a thing to be received like an education, and worn like culture. In a sense, though a very crude one, the child that has learned the three " R's " may regard himself as sufficiently educated. He will naturally be a bit proud of his accomplishments.

But when he has finished the High School his pride recognizes higher altitudes, and when he has completed a post-graduate course at the university, he has just learned how very much he does not know. Holiness is like this, only more so! Some would flourish fictitious diplomas of holy accomplishment, but the truly holy souls see their little all so insignificant compared with the great all of God, that their boast is only of the Lord and the wonders of His grace. It is thus that the vision beautiful becomes evident to the sense of the soul. None has looked upon that vision, even for the thousandth time, and beheld it all. New visions, new glories, new lights and shades, new ranges of hills, new vistas of glory-filled meadows and glory-spilled forests burst on the sight. New viewpoints reveal themselves. New meanings unfold themselves. And withal greater charity, broader sympathy, deeper humility mark the soul the higher he climbs toward the summit.

It is well we have eternity before us. We shall need it if we scale this utmost height. Time is not enough. Human weariness makes our feet heavy. We started out in the morning to scale the summit by noon, but night has fallen and we are not only far from the summit, but far from home. After all we have but come a little way. It is but a short time between sunrise and sunset,—and after that, the dark! After that the dark? Not if we are climbing the mountain of holiness, for have we not heard that "at evening time it shall be light?" And then, while the wearied body sleeps but partway up the mountain side, the spirit leaps with new-born youth and mounts higher and higher. Oh, heaven is so very far away! And yet, it is not far at all. It is here in this mountain of holiness. We walk in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That makes it heaven. It takes more than golden streets and pearly gates to make heaven. It takes Jesus to make

heaven. But didn't Paul say something about a third heaven? And did not the fathers say something about the seventh heaven? How many heavens are there? As many as there are new thrills and visions and experiences as one marches up the mountain of holiness. It will be a wonderful exploration for the ages to come! And one day,—just when we do not understand,—we shall see the king in His beauty, and we shall have reached the summit of the mountain of holiness!

It is wonderful to bring the imagination into captivity to the Spirit of Christ! He gives it wings, and he gives it clearer sight. And lest we fear that the unrestricted flight of even a sanctified imagination would land us too far afield, he has told us that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things God hath set apart for those that love him."

The mind leaps over the centuries and we hear the words of one whose eternal habitat was the mountain of holiness. He knew every pebble, every brook, every path. He knew every vision to be seen from any level. We find him now at the summit, and now at the base of the mountain. Somehow he seemed to bring that mountain nearer to the valley folks. But the word he spoke was "In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Now, will the exegete pardon us if we get things a bit mixed? We wonder if the father's house may not be quite synonymous with the mountain of the Lord's house? If so, what may be these mansions? Are they all on a level, but of different material? Are they all on the other side of the stream of death? May it not indeed be that they are not final stopping places, but rather temporary abiding places on the mountain of holiness? We are not all equally advanced in holiness. But we are all called to be saints. We do not all see with the same clearness of vision, nor from the same point of view.

Where we have arrived to-day, through the leading of the great shepherd of the sheep, is our temporary housing on God's holy hill. To-morrow a finer mansion, higher up the mountain side!

4. A View-point From Which to See God.

The apostolic admonition reads "Follow after peace with all men, and that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." The Master himself said "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." It resolves itself into a matter of getting that point of view from which God can be seen. It is wonderful how regardless the Bible is when it comes to logical consistency. Logical consistency will cramp a soul like the walls of a prison, and fetter the life like the manacles of slavery. Does not the Bible tell us that "no man can look upon my face and live?" Does it not say that "No man hath seen God at any time?" And yet, "we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." The "pure in heart shall see God."

How hungry men have been for a glimpse of the Father's face! "Show me now thy glory" was the appeal of Moses. "Sir, we would see Jesus," was the supplication of the Greeks. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" was the urgent request of the disciples. And the world has a hankering for a vision of God. What does He look like? And through the centuries men have tried to depict in wood and stone, in bronze and marble, their conceptions of God. Sometimes they have been hideous. Often they have been crude. Occasionally someone has succeeded in transmitting to the material substance something of the spiritual vision. But the hunger goes on. The soul craves for the vision supernal.

Nothing short of this can satisfy it. The hunger proves the kinship that relates the human with the divine.

But can man see God? Men have seen Him. It is but a glimpse, fleeting and transient, but it fills the soul with wonder and with joy. It sets the bells ringing in the heart. It fills the sky with light ethereal. It sends the melodies of angels ringing through the air. The pure in heart catch the vision often. A blood-red leaf reveals Him. A babe's smile brings Him so near that He can almost be touched. The voice of a friend rings with a vibrancy that is suggestive of a voice that said, "This is my beloved son." The world is full of God when the heart is right. But the shadow of sin, the faintest suggestion of selfishness can so becloud the vision that nothing divine is visible. This is the curse of sin. It hides the face of God from the hungry heart of man.

It is here, then, on the summit of the mountain of holiness, that God is seen in His beauty. On the lower heights men catch but glimpses of Him. Away from the mountain men cannot see Him at all.

Let us, as Methodists, hark back to the mountain of holiness. Our very reason for existence is our location on this holy hill. When we abandon this sacred location it is time to pull down our steeples and bar our doors. In the name of the holy Christ, and in behalf of a sinful world, let us build up the altars that have been torn down and make for ourselves anew a name for scriptural holiness to be spread abroad over the world.

XIV

A MOUNTAIN OF SONG

Isaiah 55

THERE are mountains whose climbing is a matter of deliberation. We arrive at their base, and there is nothing else to do but just climb. Unemotionally and as a matter of course we make the ascent. It is like a prescribed task,—it has to be done. It belongs to the duties tedious and uninspired. But there are other mountains that cannot be climbed with leaden feet. The soul must be buoyant, the spirit inspired, and the heart jubilant. To climb such mountains is much like the flight of a bird, the blossoming of a flower, or the smile of a babe. It is spontaneous. Such is the climbing of the mountain of song. If the conditions of the climbing are absent it strangely affects the eyesight. The mountain of song becomes invisible. It is a mountain ascended only by those of prophetic sight. The soul that climbs must have the faculty of seeing.

What a wonderful thing that God loves music! He has put it into the laughter of childhood, the song of the mocking-bird, and the ripple of a mountain stream. How wonderful that real music is inspired of God! There is a bond of kinship between real song and prophecy. Standards of music vary, but mankind loves to sing, and the more genuine the spirit of song the closer is the kinship to eternal and fundamental truth whose proclamation constitutes the soul of prophecy. The angels love to sing! Singing will be one of the occupations and accomplishments of heaven. No tedious monotones, but whole gamuts of exultant melody, expressive of jubilant emotion!

Probably some day some prosaic thinker will inflict on the race a philosophy of song. Then the joy of singing will have departed. It kills the spirit of song to make it rational, logical, or philosophical. Song belongs to the freedom of the spirit to live and work according to a law of life of its own. Men sing as birds sing,—because they want to, and cannot help it. When one sings because it is the set time and place, and because a price is set on the singing,—well, that is not real song. The heart of melody is lacking. True song is prayer. Prayerless, heartless song is but a matter of notes transferred from the printed sheet to the human voice. The soul of singing is dead.

The Bible is the song-book of humanity. Its opening chapter is a song of creation, and its last a song of redemption. Interspersed in between are the songs of Miriam and of Moses, of Deborah and of David, the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon, the Gloria in Excelsis of the angels, and the Magnificat of Mary. Repeatedly the angels, and the four and twenty elders break forth into song at the triumph of redeeming grace. We are not surprised to hear the notes of a hymn from the lips of the Son of God when he descended from the upper room into the night of Gethsemane and Calvary. The prophetic guild so united singing and prophecy as to make the latter include the former. Even the morning stars are reported to have sung in celestial chorus! Thus God's saints have often been great singers. Hence this sojourn in the mountain of song.

It takes a great soul experience to make a singer. A great joy will set the chords to vibrating, a great grief will put a resonance into the voice that will fill it with meaning. There may be accuracy and clearness of tone without it, but there is no song unless the soul is stirred. And God stirs the soul, even as great experiences stir

the soul. If under the impact of God the soul does not sing, there is little hope of its ever singing!

The prophet caught a vision of a wonderful thing. Said he: "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Let us be glad that the Bible is not prosaic nor scientific. Let us thank God for the poetry and song that brighten its pages. Let us look to it for the secret and the source of song.

1. The Sources of Song

A brief enumeration of the occasions of song in the Bible would include the following: Victory, thanksgiving, joy, redemption, and worship. The heart of song is practically the same throughout. It lies in the centralization of the soul and heart life in God. Deflection from His program and will robs song of its spirit. Deviation from His fellowship brings discord. The psalmist expressed it

> "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed;
> Therefore will I sing."

Christianity has been known as the singing religion. No dismal wails nor melancholy howls can claim Christian parentage. The secret of its singing is the stabilizing of the affections on God.

How lawless are the unstabilized affections! Well might the wise man caution "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The allurements of life are as various as the passing moods. The appetites of the soul are as various as the objects of sense. Conflict, discord, and internal strife becomes the *status quo* of the undisciplined life. And there is but one corrective discipline. The heart must be fixed. The consecration of the affections to the embodiment of a

high ideal and great purpose is the salvation of youth and maturity. There must be a center about which all will revolve. Otherwise it is but the tragic story of futile indirection and waste.

Could the secret be found whence song has its source the cries and moans of the race would be turned to singing. The long-drawn wail that has arisen from broken hearts and diseased bodies through the countless centuries have not been in vain. Inarticulate as these prayers have been, they have nevertheless been heard. And the secret of song has been proclaimed! It lies in the love of the Father grasped by the faith of the child. A gracious love, a pardoning love, a protecting love, a guiding love, a blessing love! There came One whose mission was to heal the broken-hearted, and to set at liberty them that are bound. He laid his hand immediately on the diseased spot,—a will out of true with God. With expert hand the life is brought into touch with God. The beauty of his way is apparent. The grace of his spirit is sufficient. In surrender and submission the first notes of song begin to sing themselves in the heart until in full melody there bursts a song of faith and hope, of love and cheer. Christ is the Christ of song!

It is nothing other than sin that takes the song out of life. It is selfish sin that ties the wings of the soul, that fetters the feet of the spirit. Divine surgery is needed to remove that selfish sin, but the sooner the operation the quicker the return of song. The weight of sin and failure crushes the spirit so that it cannot sing. That weight must be lifted or song becomes but hollow mockery. But one hand can lift the burden, and it is a nail-pierced hand! Calvary is but another way of spelling freedom, and Gethsemane the antecedent of song. But Satan has counterfeited most of the coins current in the kingdom. For respect he substitutes pride, for

love, lust. For the songs of joy he substitutes the maniacal gibbering of abandoned souls, with a pathetic note sometimes inserted to bring forth a lugubrious tear at the mention of mother and home. But only the blind and stupid are deceived. The songs of sin do not ring true. There is the blare of hypocrisy running throughout.

The place of song in Christian worship will be apparent when its secret is discerned. Harmony with God, submission to the divine will, and song is the spontaneous expression of the soul. Its theme is praise, its note is freedom, its nature a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. Song springs from religious experience as a note of wonder at the appearance of the unusual. Nothing has so generated song as the theme of God's redemptive grace. First an experience, then a song! If prophecy and song are related, so prayer and song frequently overlap. What masterpieces of devotion are the songs of the fathers! No greater means of grace can be imagined than the memorizing and appropriating of the great hymns of the church. How eloquent are the prayers that embody them! How expressive the praise that employs them! How rich is the worship that is familiar with them!

From the spring in the mountains flows the tiny rill which gathers momentum in its descent, and adding itself to other rivulets becomes a mighty stream, slaking the thirst of dwellers in the valley, and bearing precious freight outward to the sea. From the mountain of song starts a river of song, which, adding itself to other songs, becomes a mighty current, refreshing multitudes and sweeping opposition before it bears the freight of priceless souls to the ocean bosom of the grace divine. We can dispense with much, but not with these. Song and prophecy are indispensable to salvation.

2. A New Song Given

The psalmist was a man of experience. He knew well the thrill of song. His lips had often been tuned to sing divine praise. But he had found the old songs growing stale. At first sung with the joy of discovery and new-found expression, they had become but empty words. And when a song is just words then there is no song. We call it such only by courtesy. And the old songs became stale because the experience that had inspired them had become empty. There are stale places in religion if carelessness creep in. Who does not know those long uninspired pauses between ecstasies? The soul sings in doleful strain:

> "Where is the blessedness I knew
> When first I saw the Lord?
> Where is the soul-refreshing view
> Of Jesus and his word?"

Methodists know this state as "backsliding." Possibly others are quite as familiar with it as they. Then how can one backslide if he has never moved forward?

But to return to the psalmist. He wrote as a modern might write. His testimony has the ring of an experience meeting. As such let us hear him:

"I waited patiently for Jehovah;
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay;
And he set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.
And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:
Many shall see it, and fear,
And shall trust in Jehovah."

Thank God! one religious experience does not exhaust God. Grant the discovery of Christ, the newly awakened thrill, the ecstasy of devotion. Then grant the intrusion

of other interests, the insistence of other demands, until the fires die down a bit, and we wonder if they were ever brighter, or if we only thought so. Then the zest for prayer has slackened, the enjoyment of worship has been dulled, and of a sudden the soul knows itself to have lost the former blessedness. Theoretically this is not desirable, but psychologically it is quite inevitable. What then? Is the last state worse than the first? Not necessarily, for God can put a new song into the mouth, and it comes as rich and true and spontaneous as the early song ever came.

We had an experience of late that made the mountain of song a bit more precious. Years ago, under the inspiration of our first revival in which conversions occurred, the muse led us to the writing of a bit of song, found on an earlier page: "I am safe when I look to Jesus." We had changed from the rural to the city pastorate, and the perplexities and problems had swarmed in upon us until the early joy of faith was lost in the nervous wear of worry. We forgot about the song. We wondered if we had ever really sung! And then at the close of a sermon the old song was sung as a duet. We listened, and wondered "were those words ever really our words?" and we longed for the simpler and stronger faith of the country four corners where the song had its birth. Then came the words: "He hath put a new song in my mouth." Let the old remain, but let us on to the new. Whatever the discords, the failures, the backslidings in the stress of city life and modern society, God has a new song. He brought the psalmist out of the miry clay and set his feet upon a rock. From all we can learn that clay was slimier and slipperier and mirier than any into which we have floundered. God can set our feet upon the rock and establish our goings. And again could be heard the twitter of birds in the soul.

Then, too, if we are rightly to interpret the psalmist, it is the new song that praises God. He exhorts the reader to "sing unto the Lord a new song." We like the old familiar songs. Some of them will never die. "Rock of Ages," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," "Abide With Me," "A Mighty Fortress," "Blessed Assurance," "How Firm a Foundation," "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," and "Sun of My Soul," are but a few which will live forever. No hymnal is complete without them. But inspiration is not dead. God is not bankrupt. The revelations of God but wait for eyes with which to see. The new songs but wait for responsive strings. There are praises that have never been sung. There are graces that have never been fathomed. There are joys that have not been tasted as yet. Oh, for the lifting of the veil so that we may see the invisible and learn to worship Him in a new song. Something greater than the Elijah, or the Messiah is wanted. And God will impart it when He has an instrument that can record the vision.

Of course there is something to be said for the outward condition as well as for the inner experience. The song needs an atmosphere of its own. The Lord's songs are out of tune in this world,—or, rather the world is out of tune with the Lord's songs. There is an incongruity that defies bridging. The Lord's songs require the Lord's spirit, if not the Lord's house and His holy day. "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?" If indeed the sound is to carry afield, it must originate in the proper atmosphere and near the throne. Needless to say, the singing Christian believes in "the communion of saints." It is this communion with the Lord and with one another where the songs of Zion are born, and they need the warmth of this presence to come to maturity and wide-reaching service.

3. Wanted,—A Revival of Song

Probably the casual observer is not aware of a dearth of song or of singing. Songs seem to abound. Religious songs and secular songs, songs from the latest publishers until one might be led to think that that is all the world cares for. Jingly songs, jazz songs, songs with a message, and songs without reason, songs of pathos, and songs of bathos,—surely Pegasus has been ridden to death! But note you,—the people are not singing. Our player-pianos are substituting for the painful practice of other days. The talking machine does our singing for us. Our conveniences are greater than ever, but the spirit of song is decadent. "Tipperary" and "Over There" had us all singing,—or at least humming a brief six years ago. But we have forgotten to sing. The whistler is drowned in complaint. The singer is lost in a faithless stoicism. We do not sing at our work, and seldom at our play. Indeed, we hardly know how to play. One of Satan's greatest victories lay in robbing the labourer of his song.

We believe in revivals,—the reviving of anything of worth that is in danger of dying. We believe that a revival of the soul will require a revival of the spirit of song. This means that the germ that destroys song and the spirit of singing must itself be destroyed. What is the answer? The socialist has one theory, fairly good so far as it goes, yet it is not far-reaching enough. We do not recall to have heard more or better singing when wages were high and work more plentiful. The white-washed sty doesn't change the pig. And there is a good deal of pig walking on two feet. Paul struck the key-note when he spoke of being "transformed by the renewing of the mind." The springs of song are in the spirit. Covetousness breeds discontent, and discontent destroys song. The revival of song will not only be a product of

a revival of religion, but it will in some respects be identical with it.

Are we moving in a circle? Are we talking words? That may be. But the fact remains that the spirit of this world is so blinding the eyes of the children of God that they are singing, if at all, in a perfunctory way. The vision has become beclouded. Compromise fills the air. The heroic note is lost. The devil seems not to be so terrible, and after all one likes to broaden his acquaintance a bit. Has he not been greatly maligned? The world, the flesh and the devil are having their innings, and one of the most serious charges to be placed against this triumvirate is that they provide substitutes for singing until the faculty of singing dies of disuse. A few tears will fall over "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," but the bubbles continue to form and burst, and that is the end of the bubble and of the song. Will the Church herself ever return to great singing? Will the Gospel again move on waves of song until communities are swept? Will another Charles Wesley appear to put in winning form the winning words of redemption? Will the Church herself take her joy in the Lord seriously enough to sing about it? Time will tell. But in the meantime, may it not be a wise suggestion to get our voices in tune by practicing upon some which have brought other generations through to light and glory? There are enough left to practice on. Possibly we will discover that they will live with a new meaning.

We would take an advance step in this matter of singing. "Stir up the gift that is in thee" is the apostolic admonition. The revival of song lies in our own hands. We will never be happy until we sing. We can sing when we will. Our minds are distracted, our interests scattered, our affections divided. We must concentrate. Let us deliberately, we say, take up some song and sing.

We will be out of place, out of tune and harmony with our environment in the glory land unless we do. "Exercise thyself unto godliness" is another apostolic injunction. Calisthenics require the exercise of will power. Singing is one form of spiritual calisthenics. It is surprising what melodies will awaken in the soul when one seriously sets himself to recover the lost joy of the Lord.

"Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God;
But children of the heavenly king
Will speak their joys abroad."

The Welsh revival was a revival of song. Such a revival calls for a less restrained attitude toward life. There must be a freedom and abandon of spirit for song to ring true. Thank God! in Christ Jesus there is liberty that needs no restraint. We wonder if we have fully exhausted the significance of the Master's words: "Except ye turn and become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom." The child unconsciously sings at his play. He lives his own God-given life. It is a sad day when he has to become conscious of others. Then song either stops or becomes self-conscious. That is where most of us are to-day, and more's the pity! Need a song have words? Need it have been sung before? The harmonious, melodious outpouring of the soul in natural joyous expression is the essence of song. Such a spiritual outpouring is akin to prayer and prophecy. Of course few of us can compose new songs, and hence will fall back on the old. But the finest thing the Church of Christ can do for the world is to restore to it the spirit and joy of song.

4. How to Make the Mountains Sing

The prophet has told us about it. We have but to make the application. Inner religious experience pro-

duces a changed world. Sin darkens the eyes and clogs the brain. Sin places things out of all proportion. The skies are never so clear and bright as after the soul has found peace with God through Jesus Christ. The birds sing with a new note. The mountains skip like lambs, and break forth into song. Oh, it is fairy land to the changed heart.

The person has not lived who has added to the symphony of Isaiah 55. It took the birth and crucifixion and resurrection of Christ to make it a matter of experience. Together with 1 Cor. 13, it occupies high ground with the songs of the redeemed about the throne. Oh, that writer was a poet and a prophet! He had graduated from the world of prose and fact. He lived in an atmosphere of poetry and consecrated fancy. But he saw with an eye accustomed to seeing reality. The real thing is not a mountain that stays put, but rather a mountain that dances and sings! It sounds foolish to the practical man of scientific sense, but, bless you, he cannot understand. It isn't his fault. It is his misfortune. And it is the misfortune of this scientific age that account is taken only of uninspiring facts. There is little place left for fairies to-day, and we are the poorer for it. Science needs poetry to give it life. Fact needs truth to make it real. Matter needs spirit to give it worth. The real mountains are those that break forth before one into singing. The rest are easily forgotten. These abide, for they are of eternity.

But it all comes about through a change of heart! Thus a new heaven and a new earth is born. New creatures in Christ Jesus! From a material standpoint the world is nearly perfect. Enough to eat and wear and enjoy for countless generations of men. Its resources have not been touched as yet. But how to account for all the misery and discontent, the antagonism

and strife prevailing among men? They need a change of heart. They need peace with God through Jesus Christ. They need religion,—the old-time variety in new-time garb, but the kind that makes the mountains sing. And this is the way the work of creation will be completed. God, seeing with perfect sight, saw everything that it was very good. Man does not see it so until the touch of the Christ hand removes the scales from the eyes and the fog and confusion from the soul, and man sees as God sees. He still opens blind eyes, and makes the deaf to hear.

The melodies of nature provide an inexhaustible theme. "He maketh the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice." "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." We think of the song of birds, the gurgling of brooks as the melodies of nature. But the soughing of the pines is full of melody. The swaying of the grass blades makes a symphony of its own. The drifting clouds make music none the less real because heard only with the inner ear. Nature is full of melody because nature is full of God. Children are full of song. Happy motherhood is full of song. The pastures and hills are full of song. He would make man full of song.

XV.

A MOUNTAIN OF VISION

Ezekiel 40-47

WE continue among the mountains whose location is found in the realm of thought. If any of the foregoing is entitled to the caption of "delectable mountains," the mountain of vision is doubly entitled to it. It is seen by the eye of a lonely prophet, exiled from the land of his fathers and his God,—the catastrophe of exile, in which the young priest shares the fate of his fellow Jews. The decades pass, and the heart of erring Israel turns repeatedly to the land of their nativity. Religion, for them, is centered there. There is where God was pleased to dwell in the midst of men. The prophet develops in the bosom of the young priest, as he takes the vision of the past and transforms it into a realizable hope. The mountain of vision is a mountain of restoration. The latter days will be better than the former. Ezekiel 40-47 is the description of that which he saw from the high mountain whither the hand of the Lord had brought him in spirit.

The theme of prophecy must ever be of profound interest to the earnest student. There is an intangible something,—an elusiveness,—that tantalizes the man who would reduce it to definition. One says that it is predictive, and prophecy has become synonymous with prediction in the popular mind. But examination reduces the predictive element to a minimum. Another explains it by retrospection, but that leaves the question unanswered why the account was not therefore more accurate? The literalist insists upon an exact identification

between fact and prophecy, and fact suffers in the adjustment. Another denies the element of prediction, and the most astounding coincidences remain to be explained. Possibly it were better to approach the matter of prophecy with minds unbiased, and acknowledge that that person is a prophet in whose heart the divine predominates, prompting him to expressions of divine thought regardless of tense and occasion.

We are driven to this explanation by a dilemma. Ezekiel was indeed a prophet of God. The vision which he beheld from the mountain of vision has never been fully or exactly realized. It was an ideal, valuable as are all ideals, in holding before the sluggish mind of sense-bound men the pattern of better things. The fact that it served to awaken hope, and inspired to activity, justified its claim to prophecy.

Lest it prove a disappointment to the literal Bible student that the prophecy has not been realized in full, let us remind ourselves of the incompleteness of all prophecy. Vaguely, indistinctly, and as in a mist the outlines of a coming One, and the greyish tint of a new day have been discerned. Clearer sight was humanly impossible. All glimpses did not coincide. The light falling through the many-coloured window throws a confusion of colours on the floor. Divine truth was glimpsed by these holy men, and the light passing through the personality of the prophet assumed many of his qualities. But greater than the vision of things to come was the importance of rightly sensing eternal and spiritual values in the present crises of individual and national history. This end gained, all else was secondary.

The careful examination of the vision portrayed in the eight chapters of Ezekiel discloses a minuteness of detail that is little less than exasperating. The priest-prophet was not only lifted out of himself by the contemplation of

a temple which has never been fully reproduced, but he allowed his mind, with a tendency toward detail and ceremony, to dwell on the various items of temple, and sacrifice. He saw the returning glory of Jehovah to her, who had become Ichabod. He perceived the deepening of religious experience as the soul bathed in the rivers of grace. It was an inspiring vision for the heart-sick souls in a strange land. It contains inspiration for us as we look for its spiritual import under the more material guise. The reading of the above-mentioned chapters is therefore taken for granted. We pass on to deductions therefrom.

1. The Pattern Shown in the Holy Mount.

God has a penchant for the privacy of the mountains. It is there He has sought most frequently to reveal to His servants the things they must know. It is not difficult for a plainsman to associate God with the mountains. If material things can represent Him, the mountains can. If God dwells in certain places rather than in others, it is but natural that the majestic mountains, rugged and exalted, should prove His dwelling place. Thus the ancients thought, and the moderns may well see in it a poetic truth. And it is hither God summons men to whom He would unfold His plans. It was thus with each of the mountain souls we have studied. It is fittingly so with Ezekiel. And the grace of it all was that though the body of the priest-prophet was hampered by the conditions of exile, his spirit was borne to the high mountain by the hand of God.

When God would reveal the pattern of the tabernacle He called Moses into the seclusion of the mountains and revealed it to him there. When God would inspire the sorrow-stricken exiles in captivity He portrayed from the height of an imaginary mountain the temple restored. A

glance at the pattern here unfolded will not be fruitless.

The Temple Rebuilt.

We are not particularly interested in the old temple. Imagination has had free reign in depicting many of its details. The interest in its plan and method of construction, the personnel of its builders, the items that went into its building,—all have been given undue attention, inasmuch as the practical busy Christian has little time for biblical archaeology. It is one of the things that has been theologically overworked. Life is pretty much the same whether we know about it or ignore it, save for the needless wear and tear on nerve force for him who plods through the maze of facts and figures.

Yet, that it was a marvel of beauty and perfection may not be doubted. Its destruction was a tragedy. None but a spirit of vandalism could have so injured the religious sentiments of the people, or wrought devastation in such a masterpiece of art. It was more than a building. It was the symbol of a nation's faith and hope, its ideal and its religion. The mere matter of a return from exile was in itself of little attraction. To make it significant, the hope and assurance of the reconstruction of the temple was a necessity. And it was but spiritually natural that the hopes centering in this ideal should see a more beautiful and more wonderful temple arising on the site of the old. Hence the inspiration of Ezekiel's vision. The new temple was to be perfect to the least detail. Not a thing was to be lacking.

The Glory Restored.

It was a wonderful day when the glory of Jehovah descended and abode upon His people. They were a peculiar people, and they shone with a glory divine. God was in their midst. They developed some holy souls. Sainthood was by no means uncommon among them. That glory was none other than the Shekinah, the effulgence of the

person of the all-glorious One. But that glory began to fade as Israel went after other gods. The interests of the world caused the altar fires to die down. The light became dimmed and lessened. And finally, the glory had departed, and Israel was dispossessed. From a place of high privilege she was demoted to the level of nations round about. But there was this difference. The others had never had this glory, hence had nothing to lose. But Israel had enjoyed it. She was impoverished indeed. It was but natural that in the hearts of the holy the desire should burn with a fierce fire to have the glory restored. This was the cry of the religious, and its assurance is the message of the prophet. Ezekiel sees the glory return, and Israel shining with a splendour to which the glory of other days was a mere incident.

The Revival of Worship.

Sacrifices, and oblations, fast days and feasts, prayers and tithes were a part of Israel's worship. The modern mind thinks to have done away with these childish things. It is open to debate whether we have gained by the surrender. Christianity has indeed taken each of them and worked them over into new form and expression. But at heart they point the same way. Religion, which is a matter of the soul in its relation to God, demands outward expression. Matter is still essential to the exercise of soul. But it is not only possible but historically frequent that the outer form has persisted when the heart has withered away. So it was in Israel. God became weary with sacrifices. He despised the fast and feast days together with new moons and holidays. Sacrifice and worship broke down because the heart had died out.

Yet, in the prophetic vision, there will be a return of worship. Ezekiel must not be censured that he interpreted that worship in the terms with which he was most familiar. He saw a day when the Mosaic ordinances and

ceremonies were to be restored in full force. Nor was he greatly at fault, for he but imperfectly glimpsed his coming, who would spiritually fulfill all law and prophecy. Thus gradually the dawn of spiritual worship breaks through the half-gloom of ritualism.

The Stream of Life.

The psalmist had written " There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God." The restored city of prophetic vision would be incomplete without the river restored. And its measure is taken. The ankles, then the knees, then the thighs are reached, and finally it becomes a river of refreshing and cleansing, so deep that one may fairly swim in it. Such is the fathomless grace of God, pictorially presented with its possibilities of enlarging experience, by the hand of the homesick exile in captivity. Nor do the later prophets get away from it. The scarcity of water added greatly to its value. Its value is symbolic. What could be more refreshing than plenty of clear water to drink? What could be more welcome than the chance to revel and swim in a clear, cool stream? And such was the grace of the infinite God.

2. Seeing Through a Glass Darkly.

These visions of the prophets have been a stumbling block to many earnest and honest souls. To begin with, they have sometimes insisted that literally, letter for letter, what has been written must transpire, no matter how they must twist fact and disarrange the unfolding of history to make good their contention. The conviction grows upon us that such students do small honour to God and are laying themselves open to the chill of doubt as an alternative to fanatical insistence. They are but blind leaders of the blind.

The words above quoted are taken from Paul's letter to the church at Corinth. It is safe to say that the entire chapter was written, as it were, with Paul's heart blood, and referred to his own prophetic vision. The expression at its close was his own confession. He saw not in the full light the truth of God. He was going on to maturity, but as yet he saw indistinctly as in a mirror. And yet sight was more clear and positive to him than to the prophet of years before. It appears that here is a subject for careful consideration.

Let us gladly admit the relativity of all known truth. The absolute is beyond our ken. The perfect does not exist in human thought. We but approximate it, more or less closely. Some of us are still at some distance. Let us beware of the man whose utterances are final, whose vision of truth is exhaustive, and whose interpretations are dogmatic. Much of the difficulty in biblical interpretation, and most of the division between followers of the Christ, has been due to the failure of honest folk to recognize that truth, as humanly known, is only relative. Knowledge needs constant revision. Ideas are subject to change, and even revelation presupposes capacity. In imparting a revelation God uses such material as His servant possesses through which to make that revelation clear. God has a hard time of it trying to reveal to slow-witted and sense-bound mortals the infinities of grace. Surely, we see through a glass darkly.

A comparison of the visions transmitted to us will enforce this conclusion. Usually it is the books of Daniel and Revelation to which final resort is made to discover the last word on revelation. In many details these two books harmonize. But by no means do the equally honest interpretations of them agree. Their literal fulfillment would be little less than farcical. Their spiritual import

is by no means fully discerned. And they stand out alone and aloof from all other prophetic visions of the coming days. To us the books are still in large measure sealed. Others have repeatedly claimed to have discovered the true interpretation, but these interpretations have had to be revised so frequently as to time and place and method that their exponents must be patient with us if we persist in being sceptical. Expectations have been fostered only to give way to disappointment and unbelief.

What are we to say? If now we see through a glass darkly, then we shall see face to face. If now we know only in part, then we shall know fully as we are known. But when is the then? When the love of which he has been speaking becomes universal. Better, the degree of our possession of this love determines the clearness of our vision and the accuracy of our interpretation. And even there we must allow for the difference between the finite and the infinite.

It is thus that we dare to read a purely spiritual significance into the vision of Ezekiel. It is thus we have had to re-interpret the Messianic prophecies. It is thus we must look for the new heavens and the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness. The city we look for has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The city has no need of a temple, for God is the temple of it.

We would rescue the Bible from the hands of its zealots. We would free the church from slavery to the letter. We would throw a light of clear common sense over each page, and put a premium upon a sane and rational interpretation which sees a spiritual fulfillment even where there is verbal disappointment. And in doing so we feel that we would tread in his steps who came to fulfill, and not to destroy.

3. Day-break from the Mountain Top.

One great advantage to be had from celestial heights is that our days are longer. We see the sunrising while as yet the dwellers in the valley sleep in the greying dawn. We see the west resplendent with glory even while the valley folk are lighting the lamps for twilight. And day-break from the mountain top is an experience never to be forgotten.

It was on the mountain top that the prophets saw the dawning of a new day. The prophets are only incidentally criers of gloom. They are heralds of hope. However dark the night, the morning cometh. Indeed, they see its rays lighting the eastern sky. What they behold we receive by faith, for indeed, it must be so.

Thank God for the visions of the new day! What new day? Have the men of vision always seen the same new day in its dawning? No. Each day of hope after a night of sorrow has been the Lord's day. Every day is the Lord's day. The day of the Lord is the morning when this or that burden is lifted, this gloom is dissipated, that pain is relieved. What Isaiah saw as the day of the Lord was not identical with what Amos beheld, but both were correct. And for every dark night, for individual and for people, there is a day of hope. God still lives. Woe betide the sorrow stricken folk for whom no prophet is stationed on the mountain top to tell of the coming dawn.

Nor will any day be the final day of the Lord until all days are recognized by all people as the Lord's days. There will be more than one Lord's day a week. Some would even deprive Him of that. We would give Him all. We would see that the day of hope for the sin-cursed is as truly a Sabbath as is the seventh or even the first day. We would see the lifting of oppression from the toiler, the restoration of the sick from disease, the breaking of

habit from him that is sin-bound as truly holy days. The day of the magna charta was a day of the Lord. The day of the reformation was a day of the Lord. The day of negro emancipation was a day of the Lord. The day of the overthrow of despotism was a day of the Lord. So was the day of enfranchisement of women, the overthrow of the saloon, and the day of a fair wage and a fair chance in life for the toiler in shop and factory. Nor are the prophets all in the past. There are those who see the dawning of a better day in things social, in matters ecclesiastical, and in affairs commercial and industrial. The emancipation of life is not complete until in home, in state, in church, in school and in shop the fullest life of the individual is brought to the best expression, and not only are hungry hearts satisfied, but every child of the race has a chance to live for all that life means. Not only is every such day a day of the Lord, but every such herald is but a forerunner preparing the way for Him who alone makes fully free.

Much of what we are sensing still remains vague as a dream. But others have seen visions and have dreamed dreams and we have inherited their bequest. All that makes the present an improvement upon the past, and has wrought liberty of heart and life and thought,—all has been the fruit we have reaped from what some prophet has sown. And let us not be too insistent that he utters our peculiar shibboleth. His only credential need be the bringing in, to some degree, of a better day. Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets. Errors will be made, but gradually the indistinct forms clear and we "know as we are known." The daybreak from the mountain top is a growth. And every ray of light is but a ray from the Sun of righteousness who rises with healing in his wings.

4. Pushing Back the Horizon.

This too renders the mountain top a place to be coveted. We live in too constricted a circle. Our religious and social horizons are not very large. We draw our circles premature, heedless of far gain. The four walls of our home, our business, our church, our set bid fair to close us in. Our lives become dwarfed. Our souls become small. We flatter ourselves that our activities trend toward intensive gardening, but lack of vision means a tedious rotation of activities, and we impoverish the soil, and fail to see how barren we are. Up, and away, beloved! Get up to the mountain top, and push back the horizon. The higher you climb, the wider will be your reach of vision, and the larger will be your horizon. You will be able to fraternize with men of other faiths, and of little faith. You will appreciate life and character more as God appreciates them, for you will be nearer His view-point. You will look away into other countries and states. You will find that regardless of name and fame, folks are much the same. You will come to love them because they are so fine. You will understand their hungers and longings, and you will see the traces of the divine in them all.

"For lack of vision my people perish." Thus spoke the Lord through the mouth of His servant. And the lack continues and the perishing goes on! What can be done to correct this evil? It may be that only calamity will awaken us to the rights of the souls of men. God grant we may learn the lesson without this. But the invitations to climb these mountains of sacrifice, of law, of glory, of holiness, and of song seem to many but as idle tales. Why bother? Who will climb only to be ridiculed for a fancied vision when he returns to the men on earth? The climber will be a marked man. He will be a separated man. But if he climbs and really sees, and then comes

and faithfully tells what his eyes have looked upon, some will hear. Some will be inspired to climb and see for themselves. And those who see will have a larger meaning to life, for eternity will have seeped in.

There is much to be said for principle, but there is more to be said for life. Much is to be said for loyalty, but more for humanity. Not until the heart embraces the world, and all that pertains to life is included in the Christian program will the real kingdom be at hand. But from the height with Ezekiel, though seen indistinctly and uncertainly, the outlines of the kingdom appear, and we know that the only rightful boundary to a life on the mountain of vision is the ultimate reach of the kingdom of God.

We withdraw to-day from this mystical range of mountains, but to betake ourselves to-morrow to those that stand out in the experience of the Christ. They form, as it were, an apocrypha between the old and the new. But let us not forget them, for ere our pilgrimage is past we shall need often to ascend these heights again, for it is here we come nearest to reality and come to see the Lord.

XVI

A MOUNTAIN OF TEMPTATION

Matthew 4:1-11

HITHERTO our excursions into the mountains of the Bible have been in company with different guides. They have been great men all, standing mountain high among their fellows and overshadowing most of later generations. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, and Elisha, to say nothing of the poet-prophet Isaiah, all have been outstanding characters. Yet in each we have discovered limitations. Each had his contribution to make, and therewith he was done. Henceforth we shall ascend various heights in company with a guide who has no limitations, and whose contribution to the race is exhaustless. He will lead us to the sublimest heights, for he is the most mountainous character of them all.

In the few short chapters which deal with his life, it is of interest to note how Jesus loved the mountains. The great crises of his life were associated with mountain scenery. It was in the mountain that one of the most searching temptations of his life befell him. It was in the mountain he preached the most wonderful sermon that fell from his lips. It was to the mountain he went often to pray. It was in the mountain he was transfigured before the inner circle. It was here he agonized in the hour of complete surrender. It was here he hung a bleeding sacrifice. It was here he was received up into glory. There will be quite enough to engage our attention for the remaining chapters if we concentrate on the ministry of the mountains to the Master.

We know little of the geography of the mountain of temptation. All that is told us is that it was "an exceeding high mountain." But our interest in these mountain scenes has been prophetic and spiritual, rather than topographical. The formation of the rocks has been nothing compared with the formation of character. The altitudes of the mountain peaks has been inconsiderable when compared with the soul's approach to God. After all the mountain but gives the point of view from which to see things in true proportion and right relations. The higher the mountain the wider the sweep of vision. So it must be with the mountain of temptation.

However we have approached other mountains, we cannot approach this mountain indifferently. We feel quite at home in this atmosphere. We are conscious of being familiar with many of its features. We have been here before. Indeed, without realizing that it is a mountain from which to see life in the large we have lived much of our lives here. Perhaps we have failed to note certain features and facts that are well worth considering. The mountain of temptation may prove a mountain of blessing before we are through with it. Grace divine has made this a point of contact between God and man. When Jesus climbed this height he lifted man nearer to God, and he brought God nearer to man. But whether, with him, we make it an approach to God, or whether in blindness we fall down and worship the accuser, we cannot avoid the mountain of temptation. Its presence is universal. Our battles and temptations are those of other generations. Our defeats have often been suffered. Our victories have often been enjoyed.

Our interest now in this mountain of temptation is its place in the life of the Master. And it is on this height we see him as

1. A Man's Man

Right here let us divest ourselves of some preconceptions about the Son of Man. We have elevated him in our theology out of touch with the problems of our life. We have allowed his humanity to escape us. Let his deity care for itself for the time being. We are interested in him chiefly as a man "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin." He was a man's man. Let us look into our own bosoms and take account of all that is essentially human. This was not foreign to Christ, but part and parcel with his life. Do we feel weak? So did he. Are we wearied and discouraged? He became so at times. Do our hearts ache in loneliness? His was often so. Are our bosoms torn with passion? He understands it, and does not condemn. "For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

Let us remind ourselves that the temptations of Jesus were very real. Whatever temptation means to anyone else it meant to him. There was nothing imaginary about these temptations. We mistake when we attribute a different content to the words and expressions of Christianity from what they ordinarily suggest. Temptation is as real and genuine when appearing in the life of the Master as when appearing in our own. The very purpose of the incarnation was to identify God with every phase of human life. When God became flesh and dwelt among men, it became him in all things to become like unto his brethren. "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted."

Consider the nature of Jesus' temptations. We do not know of all of them, but a few have been recorded. The tempter never left him long. At best it was but for a season. The temptations described in the fourth of Mat-

thew are representative. There was the temptation prompted by hunger, such hunger as we have never known. Men have been known to turn savage under stress of hunger. Mothers have killed and eaten their own offspring. Forty days of fasting! Imagine being so possessed with a mission in life that to make that mission real a voluntary fast of forty days is undertaken. And the temptation came to him as it comes to us in our moments of weakness. Why not use this divine power to turn stones into bread? Surely such a mission demands a healthy and well-fed body! No, God must take care of that. Power used for selfish ends loses the divine quality. It becomes mere legerdemain. Man shall not live by bread alone. There are higher considerations than the mere preserving of life.

Again, from the mountain of temptation he looks afar and sees the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. The cities near at hand, and the distant sea bearing the rich freighted galleys! He is ambitious. Never was ambition absent from his soul. His very meekness was ambitious. He had come for world dominion. He was rightful Prince and Potentate. Even in his dying his ambition was with him. "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self"—"Father, glorify thy son that thy son may also glorify thee." Ambition is not a sin, but it affords the opportunity of temptation. The objective is legitimate. It is the means that is open to debate. Shall he take the short cut, and the painless one? Suffering is the purgative for ambition. He chose the cross route. The longest way was the surest way. Life meant little. The conquest of the world meant everything. And there was in his ambition that which stripped it of all selfishness. It was his passion to bless humanity. He will not compromise. Politicians have

ever taken the tempter's way to power. Jesus was unique in his choice, but his choice was wise. He chose from the standpoint of eternity.

We would fain remove from the Christ all association with human folly. He showed his divine character in that folly had no abiding place in him. But the very consciousness of his mission afforded the occasion of temptation. How to get the crowd! Like modest natures he may have felt a timidity at the thought of mingling with the fickle masses and gaining an uncertain hearing that might turn in a moment's time. How to accomplish the hard part in the quickest way was the question. Why not hurl one's self from the pinnacle of the temple? Was it not promised that angels should keep the beloved of God lest he dash his foot against a stone? To alight as from a parachute, or as a bird sweeps to the ground, surely that would awaken a sensation in staid old Jerusalem! People would flock to him and hear him! But the suggestion barely forms itself before his wearied mind when it is repelled. God's word will be believed, not subjected to the test of a spurious faith. The spectacular is abhorrent. Sensationalism will not advance the real kingdom. It advertises the sensationalist, and produces a kind of popularity, but the kingdom cannot grow by such means.

In these as in all of his temptations it was possible for Jesus to sin. He was not restrained from sinning except by a self-imposed restraint. His humanity demanded the possibility of sinning. His God-hood was manifest in his will to not sin. He faced legitimate desires and was tempted to take the short cut. There was an inner response to the outer appeal. But he repudiated the suggestion as unworthy. Surely this was a man's man, this was the son of God.

2. The Evolution of the Adversary

On the mountain of temptation Jesus was not alone. The record tells us that the ascent of the mountain had been in company with a notorious personage, who not only showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but promised to surrender them to him if he would but fall down and worship him. Modern psychology would interpret this affair a bit differently. But common folks have little difficulty in understanding the record, whereas the explanations of psychological science are not entirely clear nor convincing. But we shall return to this again.

Most of us have formed the acquaintance of the personage in question. Few of us have seen him, but we are subtly familiar with his suggestions and manner. Indeed we feel that we have known him for a long time. We recognize him in a wink of the eye, the movement of a hand, the tone of a voice. He comes in various guises, seldom in his real likeness. He has a propensity for masquerading as an angel of light. The apostle knew him as a roaring lion seeking prey. No walls have succeeded in excluding him. No presence is sacred to him. No place is safe from his intrusion. The gentlest souls know him and fear him. The coarsest souls know him and fear him too. Elusive yet persistent, subtle yet unmistakeable, fawning yet hostile, the personage who attended the Master on the mountain of temptation is ubiquitous and on the job.

Who is this personage? Is there really such a character? Is he one or many? Is he a creature of the imagination? Is he a useful scapegoat? Is he a man of straw? However the modern thinker may conclude, it is plain that the writers of Holy Writ had little doubt as to his nature and reality. Whether because of their religious antecedents and associations, they were by no

means disturbed by the implied dualism his recognition entailed. He was variously represented as a lying spirit sent forth from Jehovah, as an adversary whose business was to discover the weak spots in the armour of God's saints, as the real ruler of Tyre, as a real enemy of the Saviour, as the prince of this world, as the prince of the powers of the air, and as the great serpent and dragon from the bottomless pit. Others have made a more exhaustive study of the history of this individual. We must content ourselves with but the meager outline of a few facts.

There are two poems which are worth noting in this connection. The first is by Rev. Alfred Hough. The second by Alfred Tennyson. They represent the theological and the scientific interpretations of temptation. We submit them for examination.

The Devil Myth

"Men don't believe in the devil now, as their fathers used to do;
They've forced the door of the broadest creed to let his majesty through.
There isn't a print from his cloven feet, nor a fiery dart from his bow
To be found in all the world to-day, for men have voted so.

But who is mixing this fatal draught that palsies heart and brain,
And loads the bier of each passing year with a hundred thousand slain?
Who blights the bloom of the land to-day, with the fiery breath of hell,
If the devil isn't and never was? Won't somebody rise and tell?

Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint and digs the pit for his feet?
Who sows the tares in the field of time, wherever God sows wheat?
The devil is voted not to be, and of course the thing is true;
But who is doing the kind of work the devil alone can do?

We are told that he does not go about as a roaring lion now:
But whom shall we hold responsible for the everlasting row,
To be heard in home, in church and state, to the earth's remotest bound,
If the devil, by a unanimous vote, is nowhere to be found?

Won't somebody step to the front forthwith, and make his bow and show
How the frauds and crimes of a single day spring up? We want to know.
The devil was fairly voted out, and of course the devil's gone;
But simple folk would like to know who carries the business on."

Compared with the above the following lines are a bit more positive, and they arrive at quite as satisfactory a conclusion:

By An Evolutionist

"The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said 'Am I your debtor?'
And the Lord, 'Not yet; but make it as clean as you can,
And then I will let you a better.'"

1.

"If my body come from brutes, my soul uncertain or a fable,
Why not bask amid the senses while the sun of morning shines.
I, the finer brute, rejoicing in my hounds and in my stable,
Youth and health, and birth and wealth, and choice of women and of wines!

2.

What hast thou done for me, grim old age, save breaking my bones on the rack?
Would I had passed in the morning that looks so bright from afar!"

Old Age

"Done for thee? Starved the wild beast that was linkt with thee eighty years back!
Less weight now for the ladder of heaven that hangs on a star."

1.

"If my body come from brutes, though somewhat finer than their own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the scepter, Human Soul, and rule the province of the brute.

2.

"I have climbed to the snows of age, and I gaze at a field in the past
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire;
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with the glimpse of a height that is higher."

At what conclusion do we arrive? We must admit that Milton and Dante have done much to make Satan and Perdition quite realistic. They have contributed to later theological interpretation more than they could have realized. But much must be accounted for on the ground of poetic imagination which may be accurate but is not certified. Whether there be one or many devils, whether hell is a place or a state, whether temptation comes from without or within, may be open to further debate. But for practical purposes the Orthodox interpretation completely covers the ground.

3. Temptation Under a Microscope

The evolution of the devil may be more clearly traced if we take into account the nature of temptation. Much confusion, bad theology and acute suffering may be traced to a wrong beginning. There is a psychology of temptation that is often ignored, yet must be taken into account if victory is to be real and abiding. James has given us this psychology in a nutshell:

"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own desire and enticed; and when desire hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and when sin is full-grown it bringeth forth death."

Desire is legitimate, but there are illegitimate ways of gratifying it. Desire is but the reaching of the inner toward the outer in which it thinks to find gratification. It has its seat in the constitution of the body and soul. As such it was placed there by the hand of the divine Creator. Its salvation lies not in excision, but in recognition of its claims and of the claims of the larger whole in its highest character. Temptation is but the cross-lots-pull to reach the object desired. We are not responsible for the cross-lots-pull. It may have an external source, or it may be but the untrained and undisciplined reason of the savage persisting in us. But as such the temptation is not sin. Temptation courted becomes a lusty progenitor of sin, but the distinction must be kept clear. "'Tis one thing to be tempted, but another thing to sin." Temptation has within it great and terrible consequences. Potentially it is destruction. It requires but the affirmative of the soul to become the father of sin, and in course of time the grandparent of death.

There is no temptation that does not appeal to something within. There is no human life to which temptation in some form does not appeal. That something was in Christ as it is within us. He strongly wanted the very things he refused, otherwise there would have been no temptation worthy of the name. But he wanted something more, the favour of God. Temptations reveal the strength of one's powers and the weakness of his will. They lie along the line of our greatest possibilities. It is the fast express that creates the most damage when it is wrecked. Judas Iscariot was a born

financier, hence his danger. Peter was impulsive, the first to declare "Thou art the Christ," and the most strenuous to assert "I know not the man." Everything hinges on the will, and the will depends upon the understanding.

Will it be properly understood if we likewise indicate the ministry of temptation? It is but the test of character, the occasion of self-discovery by the soul. Not until its limitations are recognized can the soul lay hold upon God. Self-recognition of moral and spiritual insolvency is the condition upon which the grace of God becomes tangible. The whole of the Christian Gospel is contingent upon this interpretation of life: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Temptation affords the opportunity for that exercise of soul and will that develops character. "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation, for when he has been approved he shall have the right to the tree of life." And the victor is assured an eight-fold reward in the seven letters of Christ to the churches in Asia.

Will someone charge us with the doctrine of salvation by works? Is it true that the secret of Christ's victory over temptation is the secret of ours? That would raise us naturally to his spiritual level. This becomes possible only when our relation to the Father is as definite and harmonious as was his. It is hard to draw the line that separates him from our ordinary humanity in its proneness to sin. The incarnation cannot be reduced to the common human level. We need the infusion of the Christ spirit to effect the likeness of the Christ life. What he possessed because he was of God we possess only as we accept him as our life. He needed no repentance and conversion. We need both.

Moreover, it is quite possible to develop a morbidness in the contemplation of temptation. Things quite nat-

ural, and of themselves not sinful, easily assume gigantic proportions to nervous and sensitive temperaments. The contact with sin will leave a sickness of heart, but sin lies only in the careless and thoughtless or rebellious will. There will be struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Mistake is made when we overemphasize the part these natural tendencies play in life. If we but learned to laugh at ourselves a bit more frequently, and never to take ourselves too seriously, we would be happier and our friends would see more of heaven. There are two things to avoid, "don't spill the milk," and when it is spilled, don't cry. Every life has its spilled-milk days. The failures of life have great possibilities as stepping stones to larger selves. We have a God who is big enough, and a Gospel that is strong enough, that the peccadilloes of a conscientious soul are not going to make the stars swerve from their courses, nor bring bankruptcy to the church of God. Pilgrim got the idea when at the cross the load of sin fell from off his shoulders.

Have we qualified for divine sonship as did Christ in the heat and stress of temptation? None has done so. What then? Recognize our manifold nature. Recognize the fact that we are working out a salvation, social and individual. We do not know it all yet. It is with fear and trembling we labour. But IT IS GOD WHO WORKETH IN US. God is not dead. God is not confined to a creed, nor to a church, nor to a prescribed course of conduct. He is the God of life, of all life, and of the life of all. In the spirit of obedient sonship, let us recognize the broad extension of His sovereignty, appropriate His gracious mercy, and in confidence yield to Him the entirety of our interests. We may not see the distant scene. One step must suffice. But if He is God and if He is wise and good, "He

knoweth the way that I take. He shall try me as silver is tried." And when He has tried me and proved me, will give me just that type of work I can best do for Him.

4. The Ministry of Angels

Materialism has laid a heavy toll on the comforts of faith. If it has increased the creature comforts of life it has destroyed much of the spirit to enjoy those comforts. It has quite dispensed with God and all things spiritual. The science which takes account only of matter and natural forces has bowed God out of the universe, handed Satan his hat, and waved the angels aside with a sweep of the hand. Mother love has been reduced to nervous reaction; melody is but the combining of sound waves; prayer a harmless but a useless exercise; and worship but a remnant of ignorant superstition. And somehow after it is all over, and the storm has subsided, we feel a sense of icy-coldness in the heart. Our affections are outraged. Our faith cries out against the cynicism that leers at human weakness and mocks human sorrow. Surely, hoofs and horns both can be detected, together with the sulphurous breath of hell in the whole movement.

Yes, we believe in angels. Why? Because the Bible has much to say about them. Christ was on speaking terms with them. They play an important role in the annunciation, and their choruses serve to enchant the inhabitants of heaven. And then, don't you see, there is plenty of room for them? They crowd nothing out. They explain so many things. They supply so great a need, and the burden of disproof is on the shoulders of the cynic. We do not know how they dress, nor whether they are of one or any gender. What do we care? What is an angel but a messenger? Is God con-

fined to clothed spirits for messengers to bear His word to men? We are but beginning to discover how full is earth and sea and sky of forces we had never dreamt of. Are these forces blind? They work very intelligently for blind forces. Why not admit the Biblical presupposition and allow the angels to live?

"Then Satan leaveth him for a season, and angels came and ministered unto him." The ministry of angels! It is the delegated ministry of God. Nor is God less near in this ministry. There is much we cannot fathom, but the comforting facts are here. Mystery pervades the whole realm of faith, but faith still works miracles in broken hearts. The angels of God minister still to men. Let us not seek to analyze their features, but submit to their ministry. A warm faith, an earnest hope, a sincere devotion, an unhesitating submission, and softly through the hours of darkness angel fingers smooth the furrowed brow and ease the tired heart. God's messengers come to strengthen us in the fight!

We know little about their rank and file. Gabriel and Michael are mentioned as holding high station among them. Their host is unnumbered. Their presence is everywhere. Their employment is to guide and protect. They seek not their own praise, enough if they but bring the will of God to pass. To the life that would attain the fullest strength and comfort they are indispensable. We have gained much in recent years through the findings of truth in their application to individual and social welfare. But it is to be questioned if we have discovered anything that will quite make up for the loss of a faith that could face death with peace and sing

> "Come, come angel band,
> Come and around me stand.
> O bear me away on your snowy wings
> To my eternal home."

Were we not tempted and tried, and did we not need all of the spiritual aid available it would not be so important. But in the midst of all the worth-while in the new, let us not forsake the worth-while in the old. In other days God sent His angels to men. Men knew more about God. Men communed with these messengers of God, and, behold! it was God with whom they talked. And the faith that overcomes the world is the faith that seeks the facts beneath the surface in these ancient records and builds on them. And all facts are not material facts. Indeed fact and truth belong to the realm where angels are at home. A bit more child-like faith would bring the ministry of angels to the modern church and age as truly as they ministered to Christ in days agone. And if there were more evidence of angels in our modern churches, even as there were those of the churches of Asia (whatever explanation biblical criticism may finally adopt) would it not be a greater blessing to the world to feel and know that God's angel was operating from the church as a center, and through definite agencies, than to sense our divisions, our coldness, our lack of vision and purpose? One wonders at times if the world really thinks we know much about God!

Our plea, then, is for a return to the faith that gives victory in temptation because it recognizes a tempter, and strength after the conquest because it permits the ministry of angels.

XVII

A MOUNTAIN OF BLESSING

Matthew 5:11-12

THE exact location of the mountain of blessing is problematical. Without other foundation than inexact tradition it has been identified with the "Horns of Hattin," probably first by the Crusaders, and later by an easily persuaded flow of travelers. There are some grounds for assenting to this location as a probability, but few for the establishment of the location as a fact. It is a square shaped hill with two tops, and is the only height seen in this direction from the Lake of Gennesaret, from which it is easily accessible. The platform at the top is adapted to the assembly of a congregation. Its situation is easy of approach to the peasants from the Galilean hills, and the fishermen of the Galilean lake. Thus, it stands out as the more probable scene of this phase in the Lord's ministry, rather than the other hills which are merged into a uniform barrier round the lake.

Here, as elsewhere in these mountain climbs, we use the term mountain with a degree of hesitancy. If this be the hill from which emanated the Sermon on the Mount, its height is relatively small,—a matter of some sixty feet above the plain. It was the event that transpired there rather than the height of the hill that constituted it a mountain. So it was with the mountains of victory and of conspiracy. So it will prove yet again. Again, it is the company of him in whose fellowship we climb that gives the mountain meaning. And because he was the highest mountain peak of human history, and because he

has brought to the world a veritable mountain of blessing, we will dismiss from our thought the possible geography, and content ourselves with the spiritual significance attached to this mountain scene.

There is much that is distinctly revolutionary in the ministry of the Christ. It was revolutionary in his day, and if properly grasped would be equally so now. He was the Lord of life, and whatever savoured of mustiness and petrifaction was utterly distasteful to him. His miracles were performed with a naïve disregard to the religious expectations of his time. What was written was of far less import than what was living. He avowed himself greater than Moses and Solomon and dared to put the faith of Israel on a higher plane than even its prophets had dreamed. There was a divine unconventionality about him. He dared to make friends with the publican and the harlot. He dared to eat without regard to the ceremonial washing of hands. He dared to travel and heal on the Sabbath and here, at the beginning of his ministry, we see him discarding temple and synagogue in order to preach under the open sky, in God's temple not made with hands.

It is likewise of interest to note the size and personnel of his congregation. Misinformation has often surrounded him with the multitudes who flocked to his healing ministry. But an examination of the text does not bear out this interpretation. He saw the multitudes, but went away from them into the mountain, and when he had seated himself his disciples,—not yet the full twelve,—came unto him and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying. How contrary to all human procedure! A multitude waiting to see and hear, but he goes away into secrecy. A great congregation possible, but he delivers his message to a little band of less than a dozen men. Popularity is not success. Crowds are no

indication of real work done. Impregnate the few minds with vital truth and that truth will permeate the mass. Scatter the choicest grains of truth in the crowd and little will be left to testify to what was done.

And it further indicates the wisdom of imparting the best to the select few. It is here the gospel program and objective is launched. He must preach to the multitudes in time, but that time is not yet. When that time comes, it will be in the form of parable. But now he cuts close to the line. Straight from the shoulder comes the truth with a searching power that denudes the soul and pares faith down to hard muscle. From the standpoint of modern criterions of success, that sermon was a failure. Homiletically it left much to be desired. Possibly many a professor of homiletics would shake his head at such a sermon were it to be delivered by a theologue to-day, did the professor not know its source and origin. But it made an impress on the minds of a small group of men which time could not obliterate. Possibly this is the only criterion that counts. It dispenses with professionalism and gets down to results.

Thus it chanced that the mountain of blessing became the first pulpit of our Lord. It is significant that this was the keynote of his ministry. Blessing was the object of his coming. Not to condemn, not to frighten, not to curse, but to bless men! So much has been read into this ministry that inspires fear rather than love! So much of the wrath of the lamb rather than the love of the shepherd, that it has been a doubtful boon to the many to come into too close contact with him. As a matter of preparation for death,—surely. It ought not to be neglected. A sort of a necessary evil, as it were. One of those unpleasant duties! And the church has erred in misrepresenting the Christ of blessing to the world. It is for the modern church to revive the keynote of his

ministry. Hence, from this mountain of blessing let us give our thought to a few important matters of interest.

1. Focussing the Binoculars.

As an expert guide our leader would have his followers prepared to see things in their right relation. If the beauties to be seen from the mountain of blessing are to be seen truly, they must be seen rightly. The distant must be brought near. The foothill must not shut out the lower heights. The importance of placing first things first is apparent. So, the first thing to do is to get the binoculars properly focussed. Things look a bit blurred with the naked eye, and men continue to see them blurred until this detail of proper perspective and focussing has been attended to. The Master attends to this in the series of beatitudes he introduces as the text of this unique and wonderful sermon.

He introduces a note of happiness at the very start. All the misery and unhappiness in the world is due to spiritual astigmatism. The glass must be fitted to the eye, and then things appear very good even as they did to the Creator when He made them. It is noteworthy to the English reader that the term " blessed " and " happy " are interchangeable. Too often the aspiring soul has longed for some indefinite beatific state, whereas God has but meant for folks to be truly and healthfully happy. Happy in health, happy in work, happy in love and friendship, happy in spiritual development! It is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, who is the happy man. It is more happy to give than to receive. So the classes Jesus enumerated at the outset of his sermon are to count themselves happy.

We open our eyes a bit as we note this fact. This is a motley association of personalities to call happy. " Blessed

are the poor in spirit,"—"Blessed are they that mourn,"—"Blessed are the meek,"—"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness,"—"Blessed are the merciful,"—"Blessed are the pure in heart,"—"Blessed are the peacemakers,"—"Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake,"—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you," etc. Bear in mind that blessed means happy. By what stretch of the imagination can this company be termed a happy company? Poverty of spirit! The soul overwhelmed with grief! The heart too timid to make its presence known! The life burdened with a hunger for character unattained! The soul that foregoes the privilege of justice! The life that denies itself the pleasures on which the world puts heavy emphasis! The misunderstood middle party who attempts to bring about reconciliation and gets the worst of it! The persecuted and reviled individual who suffers for the sake of an ideal! Can the Master be joking? None but an enthusiast indifferent to fact would call them, singly or collectively, a happy group.

But observe that here is where the need of refocussing our binoculars is most apparent. The world has very specific ideas as to what constitutes happiness and how it is to be obtained, but to date has been unable to realize its ideals. If the classes most favoured cannot lay claim to happiness, what is there to hinder the classification of those unfavoured in the group pronounced happy? If happiness does not lie in present possession, it must lie, if at all, in future possession. We are not of those who see happiness only in the past. Here, then, is the declaration of the program of the kingdom. Its objective is happiness, and its beneficiaries are those to whom life and the world have not been kind. The Gospel is good news for the unfortunate. The best news is that happiness is theirs by divine right, and that it is a part of the divine plan to

bring them and happiness into direct relation. At a later date the Master's proof of his Messiahship lay in the fact "the poor have the glad-tidings preached to them."

As such the kingdom has a distinctly social outlook. Whatever makes for poverty of spirit, for sadness, for timidity, for hunger and thirst,—unsatisfaction of the hunger of the soul, and all the rest,—all will be done away. Inequality will be obliterated. Injustice will be dethroned. Tyranny and oppression, sickness and accident, misunderstandings, hatred, and sin will all give way to a new social order where God's reign is recognized, and where "man to man the war-rld o'er, shall brithers be for a' that." The kingdom plan goes straight to the heart of the individual and demands a readjustment and renovation. But its goal is a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.

It is important that we get this fact fixed in mind. All that makes for happiness in the truest sense is part of the kingdom program. But happiness lies less in external conditions than in internal condition. It is the bearing of the individual upon his environment rather than the bearing of environment on the individual that makes for happiness. And all that is needed to effect this proper adjustment is included in the glad-news of the Christ.

2. *Sunrise from the Mountain of Blessing*

It is evident, from what has gone before, that Jesus was inaugurating a new day. From the mountain of blessing we are in a splendid location to watch the sunrise. It will have many glorious features which we will do well to note. And first we see the lengthening rays of dawn. They reach up, as it were, out of the night of the past. Before the eyes of Israel both the law-giver and the prophets had upheld lofty ideals of righteous character which they despaired of ever attaining. Law

upon law, ceremony upon ceremony, fast following feast, divers sacrifices and washings,—all were tried and failed to produce that holiness without which man cannot see Him. Higher ideals have never been entertained. Greater effort to attain them has never been made. And yet, disappointment stares the earnest soul out of countenance!

Do you note that so far from abolishing these ideals, the gospel but emphasizes them. Not one jot or one tittle shall be removed till all be fulfilled! The law or the prophets are not to be set aside. Righteousness must even exceed the boasted attainment of scribe and pharisee if one would be a partaker of the kingdom. There is a strengthening along the entire line. The whole moral defense is stiffened, and the offensive carries the war into the enemy's country. To the superficial reader it is but a reemphasis upon the inescapable doom of failure. To him who reads between the lines there is a secret of attainment. But first the axe must be laid to the root of the tree. Even the thoughts and purposes of the heart must undergo examination and change. The transformation must begin at the source of all life.

First, there is the matter of heart guilt in the matter of murder. To hate is to kill. In the sight of God the vengeful heart is guilty of homicide. The uncharitable thought, the hasty judgment may savor of the fumes of perdition. The contempt bred of contact with human weakness and error is destructive of the very foundation of the kingdom. There is but one right way to approach God,—make sure that thy brother hath no just complaint against thee. God accepts the gift of him who holds no malice but charity in his heart.

Second, there is the age-old problem of the social evil. Lamentable as it is, and defiant of restrictions and limitations imposed by society, there are phases of this prob-

lem which call for more penetrating judgment before censure is indulged in. The Master's own dealings with human frailty are indicative of his grace and mercy. But what shall be said of the pharisaical spirit that sits in judgment on brothers and sisters whose moral fibre broke under the strain of temptation? The harbouring of an impure thought, the covetous glance of an eye, the voluntary yielding of the soul to the mere suggestion of impurity is sufficient to place the intolerant soul on the level with his less fortunate fellows. Much is to be gained in self-discovery. Tolerance and charity are often ignored until we awake to our own ungodliness in the searching light of the purity of the Master. One thing is to be cherished at whatever cost. The soul must be saved. Whatever the cause of offense, better dispense with it than to flirt with the damnation of a soiled soul.

But note, too, that the dawning of the new day has wonderful promise for womanhood. Hitherto the plaything of masculine caprice, subject to dismissal and divorce on slight pretext, her rights shall be recognized in the kingdom about to be set up. Her place of honour as wife and helpmeet is inviolable while her loyalty to her husband holds true.

Right here is afforded an opportunity to do a bit of free interpreting of the will of the Master. The subject of divorce has engaged the attention of the church through all the intervening centuries. Did Christ aim here to utter the final word on marriage and divorce? We cannot avoid the conclusion that Christ's words have been given a finality he did not intend. The letter has been exalted to the crucifixion of the spirit. That marriage is sacred is only partly true. Some marriages are indeed sacred, and all the civil contract can do is to put the sanction of society on a relation already blessed of God. Other marriages are nothing more than civil con-

tracts, adopted as convenient but by no means divinely originated. To impose the restrictions of irksome incompatibility upon two lives till dissolved by death can surely be no part of the divine plan. Elsewhere mistake once made is subject to remedy. Without hesitation we believe that the spirit of Christ would justify the separation of unholy marriages, and the forming of such unions as would serve to emancipate the deeper and fuller life of the soul in the spread of a happiness in which heaven participates and is reflected. Ecclesiastical tyranny alone has made a sacrament of a union too often unblessed of heaven. We have broken with this tyranny in other connections. Let us not hesitate when the happiness of life is at stake. When life is sacrificed for the institution of a loveless and debasing marriage the objective of the Christ is forgotten. There is but one orthodoxy,—the orthodoxy of life. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Only the superficial and wilfully misconstruing will interpret the above in the terms of license and of moral laxity.

Third, there is something to be said on the subject of a man's word of honour. The kingdom will call for such integrity that a man's word is as good as his bond. To swear to the truth of a statement will be a totally unnecessary procedure. Swearing to a statement does not alter its truth or falsehood, it but perjures the liar. Evil comes from adding to words. Yes means yes, and no means no. The evil one is responsible for the necessity of more than these.

Fourth, there is that matter of vengeance. What benefit has the *lex talionis* ever brought to man? Feud upon feud has served to exterminate whole communities. The "eye-for-an-eye" scheme has but one drawback. It doesn't work. Much of the science of penology has been

totally abortive. An endless chain is thus constructed, and it gets nowhere. Rather let it be the solution of the "second-mile" and of the "cloak also." There is a psychology here foreign to the kind known among men, but it challenges trial, and it is integral in the life of the kingdom. It all reduces to love of enemy as well as friend, thus making a friend of the enemy and justifying the claim to participation in the family of the gracious and tolerant God.

So it is that almsgiving and prayer are judged not by amount nor by ostentation, but by their secrecy. It all lies in the inner life. The kingdom is to be the kingdom of the inner life. Self-denial varies in its benefits directly as it remains secret between the soul and God. The quest for human praise cuts the wings of prayer, cuts the nerve of charity, and adds rather than subtracts in the matter of self-indulgence. The kingdom is a spiritual kingdom with spiritual interests and values. It takes a life with the eye single to the glory of God to qualify. Only so can a life effectively and safely lead.

And as we look upon such a regime, with hearts devoid of anger and impurity, with honour and integrity enthroned, with grace supplanting vengeance, and spiritual exercises performed in secret with God alone as spectator,—we wonder if such a day will ever dawn? What grounds have we for believing that this is indeed the dawn of a new day rather than a belated "aurora borealis?" Simply these. He whose words we have been paraphrasing was the sun whose rising sent the forward rays of prophetic light, and now in his mounting above the horizon introduced the new day as a light lighting every man coming into the world. Every ultimatum from his lips was a promise. Every command a prophecy. The program outlined became but the outline of a life begun and imparted, a light radiating and reflecting until any

student of history and any observer of human nature recognizes that a new day has dawned, and its full glory has not yet arrived. But nineteen centuries ago these words issuing from the mountain of blessing were as the grey dawn of an early morning, the sunrising of the day of the Lord.

3. *A Short Cut to the Mountain Top.*

Ordinarily one may be a bit hesitant about taking short cuts. But in the present case the road to the mountain top has been made unusually circuitous by well-meaning, but somewhat impractical folk. Much has been said as to the number of blessings to be enjoyed in the victorious life. We have little motive for stirring up controversy. A short cut to the top of the mountain of blessing would be quite a boon. The stages of the soul's development may be marked out from a quasi-religio-scientific standpoint, but humble folk have little time for the abstractions of theory and theology. The Master climber, who understood people better than his followers have done, understood this and adapted himself to them. He has given us the short-cut in a word. It is this

> "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

It remained for that unique hand-maiden of God to give a clear expression when, as she sought to lead the inquiring soul into the fullness of the blessing, Amanda Smith said,—"Honey, you gets the Blesser and you'se got the blessin'." It was God's assurance to Abraham over again "I am thine exceeding great reward."

One might stop to note the causes of human unhappiness. It lies in false valuations, division of interests, and unnecessary concern over the necessities of life. Material treasure becomes a fetter rather than a joy. Let

the soul that would be happy lay up treasure in heaven beyond the reach and touch of time and man. Spiritual riches alone last through the decades and centuries. The attempt to hold on to two worlds is a bit difficult,—indeed impossible. The spirit of the world but drives with the lash of the slave driver. Faith in the God who provides food and raiment for the rest of His creation can alone bring happiness to the divided heart. There are definite needs of body and mind, but God has not forgotten them. Trouble comes when we divert our thoughts to the things which are not necessary, but at best are only conveniences. It is open to debate if life is as full with the emphasis on external possession as it was in the days of simpler living. Can not a case be made out for old time character? Or is it only a dream of a past that never was?

At any rate we have the short cut. Seek the kingdom and righteousness of God first, and other things will be supplied. Do we believe it? Many of us confess such a faith, but in reality know little of its peace. Our ideas of the kingdom may be easily confused with our personal desires. Such confusion does not belong to the single eye. God waits for a church that, ignoring the wisdom of this world, will seek His kingdom first and leave the results with Him. Would such a program affect the list of conference appointments? Some of us think that it would. It would also probably have a very salutary effect on the quadrennial meetings of the denomination,—if the reports from other years are to be credited.

Let us not be unmindful of the various blessings the fathers have disclosed to us. There is undoubtedly a first blessing when the soul knows its sins forgiven. A second blessing will undoubtedly dawn in the full assurance of God's sanctifying grace in the soul's behalf. What other blessings may be added to these is a matter of discovery and experience. Surely there are more than two. But

however-so-many there may be, all is possessed in theory when God is possessed in fact. And little by little the theoretical possession unfolds in real possession as the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus become manifest. The simple possession of Christ becomes the embodiment of all else. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" "Christ is made unto us wisdom from God, righteousness also, and sanctification and redemption; that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The package is given us with all its contents unguessed. It is our possession in theory until it becomes ours in fact. One by one the smaller items within are examined and appropriated, but there is always more that awaits discovery. This is the inheritance of the servants of God. Hence it is but a matter of claiming all because it is freely given us of Him who imparts His Spirit to us without measure. And then as discovery follows discovery comes the enjoyment of all. There are some riches we will not be able to appreciate and appropriate this side of eternity.

There is another phase to this short cut to the mountain top. It has to do with "walking in the other fellow's shoes." It is odd that our own footgear is so ill-adapted to mountain climbing. In other words, it is resolved into the grace and charity with which we view the shortcomings of others. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." It is over again the matter of seeing the mote in the brother's eye, and ignoring the beam in one's own.

It is so easy to censure. The passing of unkindly, hence unjust, judgment becomes a matter of second nature. Prejudices are largely in evidence. We pre-

judge. And prejudgment is unfair, unjust and unmerciful. We berate Peter for denying his Lord, notwithstanding the fact that Peter was the bravest of the twelve. The rest had forsaken Jesus, and fled. But Peter had drawn his sword, and had even followed Jesus to the judgment. There is a limit to human nature, especially before it is Spirit-baptized, and Peter was doing mighty well for Peter. Would we have been as bold as he? It is easy to affirm that where he failed we would have met the test, but that is open to doubt. Observe that Jesus knew his man, as he always does. Peter's avowal of loyalty was met by the prophecy of a thrice-denial, but immediately followed by the encouragement, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God, have faith also in me," and lest repentant Peter regard himself as excommunicated quite, the resurrection message is "Go, tell my disciples and Peter, that they go before me into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

Life is an unfolding marvel. It is the mark of the cad and the Pharisee to pass judgment upon a fellow being, without the profoundest humility and compassion. In self-righteousness we but boast of our moral attainments and integrity, when the test of temptation and the search-light of Christ's interpretation show us that we have nothing of which to boast. The only one qualified to judge, refused to pass judgment, for he came, not to condemn, but to save the world. The germ of all sins lies hidden in every heart.

There is another fact that must be taken into account. Appearances are largely subjective. Facts take on a colouring peculiar to the medium through which the light chances to pass. There is no more accurate determination as to the quality of a soul than the judgments it passes on other souls. Actions harmless and innocent in them-

selves appear as little less than criminal when seen through eyes whose astigmatism is traceable to perversion of soul. In every judgment the judge is on trial. There is abundant need for that attitude of humble charity which considers one's self lest he also be tempted. It has been the experience of one soul, at least, that every judgment he has passed on others has reacted as a boomerang to his own soul.

We see what we look for. What is lacking in fact is supplied in fancy. Granted the facts may be seen as facts, their interpretation is by no means a certainty. It is safe to say that only the kindliest and most optimistic judgment approximates the truth. People are open to improvement, and it takes the prophetic eye, focussed by a warm and sympathetic appreciation, to see the best that with patient culture may be brought to flower. Souls will normally respond to faith reposed in their motives and purposes, and we serve to advance or hinder the divine work of creation as we see and emphasize the good or the evil in man. God was the supreme optimist. When as yet there was little or nothing on which to build, He saw the divine possibilities in the life of the lowest, and in giving of His best to realize that possibility, He laid the foundation of the Gospel.

It is therefore a pious duty that we refrain from those reactions on human conduct that will thwart the very end for which we strive. "Love thinketh no ill. Love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. Love hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." Where laws fail there is the possibility of love succeeding. Where will power is weak, love will impart strength and inspiration. Where moral ideals waver and fall, a love born of God will do more to reestablish them than aught else.

4. Granite for Building Purposes.

The gospel of the kingdom is for our "edification,"—our house-building! The great Carpenter has charge of the building. He is the architect and contractor of our faith. However separated the ideas may have become under various influences home and happiness were intended to be nearly synonymous. Much depends upon the plan of the life if the building is to be complete,—a suitable temple, as it were, for the Holy Spirit. But much likewise depends upon the ground-work. There must be granite from the mountain for the foundation, even as there must be trees from its crest for the superstructure. And we think we have found both in the mountain of blessing. The Master closed that wonderful address to that little group which had enlarged by the addition of hearers from the multitude below, and his closing words were these:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

To which we are tempted to add that the construction under the Master Carpenter had something to do with the outcome.

Blessedness or happiness depends upon the inner life rather than upon the outer conditions. Storms come to the Christian as to the man outside. The difference lies in the resistance of the Christian life to the storm. This resistance comes not of personal endurance and grit. Humanity alone cannot stand the adversities of life. We marvel at the self-discipline of men who alone attempt to breast the storm, but something always crumbles. It may be in the will, or in the realm of ideals, or in the

secret peace, or in the personal heart life. But where Christ is dismissed with a courteous wave of the hand, something of inestimable worth is bound to break. It requires the reenforcing of the divine word of comfort and wisdom, of encouragement and righteousness. It requires the reenforcing of the divine life welcomed by faith and love. Then and then only can the house stand.

We load up on the wisdom of earth's sages, and stock our minds with the words of men who have struggled and failed, or whose success has been but moderate. A challenge rings through the centuries to hearken and do the words of the Master Climber. Happiness hinges on these words. It is a happiness of character attainment, a happiness that lasts even when the storm lashes the face, that brings a joy which gives men courage to dare and endure hard things. The world's rules of happiness are negative. At best they tell us how not to do it. Here is one with a positive program for the happiness of nations and classes and races and individuals. The happiness of every man, woman and child, of every lonely heart, of every bruised soul lies involved in these words. This is the objective of the kingdom. On this it stands or falls. One wretched soul is a challenge to the whole program. Shall we not take this program seriously, study the secret of the joy of the Lord, yield ourselves to its realization in us, and discover its hidden possibilities? The world waits for happiness. The Christ waits to bless. Who shall bridge the gap between? Who follows in his train?

XVIII

A MOUNTAIN OF HUNGER

John 6:1-14

TO any student of the life and mission of the Master the comparison of the four gospels is of considerable moment. One might have concluded that one well-written memoir would have been sufficient, but the Providence which overruled the writing of the Holy Record evidently saw things otherwise. Each of the four evangelists has his own peculiar contribution to make. As a result we have a composite photograph of our Lord,—four profiles of the same face. We are not interested to present the peculiarities of these writings in detail. Suffice it to note the variant accounts of the scene before us.

The feeding of the multitude,—even granting that there were two events in which Jesus miraculously ministered to the hunger of men,—is one of the few narratives common to the four evangelists. In the fourfold witness to this unique event there are certain things in common among the narrators. The presence of the multitude, the attitude of the disciples, the hunger of the people, the divine challenge, the disciples' response to the challenge, the source of supply, the feeding, the size of the multitude, and the disposal of the residue, are practically the same in each instance. But there are certain differences in the accounts. The invitation of the Master to come into the desert place to rest awhile, is peculiar to Mark. The identification of the place with Bethsaida is peculiar to Luke. John says nothing of the proposed holiday, and he alone gives the scene a moun-

tain setting. It is to John we are indebted for the right to enroll this event among the mountain scenes of the Bible.

The limitations imposed upon religion have been various. Man has always been religious, but the application of his religion to the various phases of life has not always been recognized. It has been frequently divorced from the ordinary and commonplace, and referred only to the miraculous and unusual. It has been supposed to have a purely spiritual application with little relation to the material needs of life. A salvation that included spirit and soul and body was indeed in the mind of the apostle, but it has not yet penetrated to the core of the church. A social salvation approaches heresy according to a few time-honoured standards. The sacrament of breaking bread in the Master's name and presence is often discounted as a scheme sulphurous and diabolical. But the scene before us reveals Jesus as a social saviour, a brother interested in the material needs of men. And because we, too, have our physical and spiritual hungers we will to climb the mountain of hunger with him who came to bless and not to condemn humanity.

In our treatment of this scene we shall avail ourselves of such light as we can secure from other sources. And thus we shall turn to Mark for the setting of this scene in the order of events in the life of ministry of the Master.

1. *An Interrupted Holiday*

It was immediately after the disciples had returned from their first tour of evangelism, and they were very eager to tell the Master all about it. They had been commissioned to preach the coming of the kingdom, and to heal the sick and cast out demons, and true to the promise the power had been given them to do these won-

derful things. Their enthusiasm and excitement knew no bounds. Even the devils were subject to them! And how eager they were to talk it over! But those importunate people were interfering with their plans. They were bringing their sick to the Master, and as he ministered to them they crowded upon him until he and the disciples had no room so much as to sit down and eat. It is well to spend and be spent in service, but there comes a time when the duties one owes himself crowd out his other duties. The disciples were impatient, and the Lord gave the gracious invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." So they got into the little skiff and made across the lake, only to be met by the multitude, who, seeing their destination, hastened to arrive there first. The little holiday was sadly interrupted. We can hardly blame the disciples if they felt a bit cheated out of their rights. But they had more to learn. The holiday was turned into the busiest time of the day, and its climax was so important that while but one evangelist tells us of the proposed holiday, all four tell us of what transpired.

We would utter a word of warning at this juncture. There is a tendency of many earnest souls to drive, drive without relaxation when engaged in kingdom work. Often it is said "the devil takes no vacation, neither should the Christian." But we must remember that Satan was never held up as an example for good people to follow. The Master believed in relaxation and in the quiet time alone. His invitation to his disciples was sincere. He knew well the danger of extremism under enthusiasm. What the disciples needed more was just the quiet hour he planned for them. But what the multitude needed most was service. Hence the "more" had to give way to the "most." Moreover we find the Master himself taking advantage of the opportunity to

slip away from the crowd to be alone with the Father. We do not understand that his holidays were idle, but they were restful and strength-imparting. The strong lives, the victorious lives, and the most useful lives are those which take time to rest alone with God. Many of us are wasting life and usefulness because we will not learn this lesson.

It is well to remember that service saps vitality. Jesus perceived that virtue had gone out of him when he healed the afflicted woman. It costs to serve. It costs blood. It may cost years from the end of life. But it is worth it. It costs more not to serve. But there must be wisdom rather than recklessness in expending the strength of life. Recuperation is as truly a duty as is consecration. Recreation is but re-creation. God is the God of both. No Christian can come into vital touch with human need without its costing. The physician risks disease in battling with disease. The Christian cannot represent his Master by "absent treatment." The needs of souls are imperative. They are real. We must touch elbows with them if we would make our profession more than words. They are precious souls, souls for which the Master died. They will get a strangle-hold on us if we are not careful. Woe to the man who goes forth a-rescuing in his own strength! Even with his hand in touch with God's it will cost him many a night's sleep. Many a contact will be used of Satan to gain his own ends, if the opening is made. We dare not leave our task. We dare not approach it alone. We need reenforcement and renewal in the quiet place with Christ. Many a life of promise and good intention has fallen because this simple fact was ignored. Overstrain, overburdened, under-prayed! You have it in a nutshell.

But,—and this will appear contradictory to what has

been said,—the service may crowd in upon the time of rest and insistently demand attention. The multitude must be healed. Let it cost blood and vitality. What then? Did it not cost Calvary? We must learn the secret of so combining the quiet hour with the ministry to men that they may be simultaneous. Jesus knew what he was doing when, much as his disciples needed the hour of conference and inspiration, he caused that hour to be turned into service. Brethren, too many of us are cumbering the ground. For one who wears out in service nine are not noted for overexertion. A bit more pious blood spilled would do much to revive a dormant if not a dying church.

2. A Bread-and-Butter God

The God of Elijah understood well the need of just plain food in the recovery of His servant. We do not hear any words of sarcasm from His lips directed at man's physical need. He made man with all the physical desires of appetite and passion, and it is part of His plan to meet the manifold needs of the creatures whose nature He originated. He saw that it was not good for man to live alone. He provided for the needs of man's social nature by instituting the home, and by inspiring a love which should permeate society and not only bind the members thereof in the bonds of appreciative affection, but bring the best in the life of each to fullest expression. Repression of natural instincts is one of the war measures made necessary through Satanic influence. When God reigns supreme, expression rather than repression will be the order of the day.

It is interesting to compare the attitude of Jesus on this occasion with the attitude of some of his followers. He was made known in the breaking of bread and prayers. His contemporaries found fault with him because

he sat at meat with publicans and sinners. They called him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. There is a familiar sound to these words. We have heard them recently. The occasional meal at which members of the family of God sit together in the house of God has been attacked as an institution of Satan. But there is a genuine sacrament in the act of eating together indulged in by Christians. Let the Church not vie with the restaurant, but in the name of our common humanity, let there be more of the breaking of bread in the name of Christ. Jesus showed himself on the occasion of the lesson to be a bread-and-butter God.

"That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." Religion has as its goal the emancipation of the soul from the controlling influences exerted by the bodily demands, in the ultimate likeness of the divine. But religion has its roots in the common things of human life. The duties of ministering to physical need are religious duties. Life must be maintained for the spirit to expand. Not by denying the place of the ground under our feet, but by recognizing that ground and mounting its highest points does man approach the stars. Much criticism of late has been expressed because of social-service activities on the part of the church. It is possible that the deeper needs of the soul have been eclipsed in ministering to the need of the body. But we cannot forget that the Master's own criterion of fidelity to his cause lay in the "inasmuch" of ministering to human necessity and misfortune. It takes a big man to grasp the importance of apparently opposing truths, but the Christian must be a big man. It takes a big church to minister to the bodies as well as the souls of men, but if the church be true to the bigness of her Christ nothing less will do. A bread-and-butter Christ calls for a bread-

and-butter church. Thus alone will we meet men on their ground to lift them to his ground. The Christ who spake as never man spake, and who opened the glories of heaven to human sight, hesitated not to become the servant of man, in healing their loathsome diseases, in feeding their hungry stomachs, and in washing their soiled feet.

There is a deal of outgrown heresy that still clings to the minds of many pious folk. Because Satanic appeal makes its presence felt through bodily channels, there is the temptation to look upon the things of the flesh as evil. The demands of the body for food and drink are treated more or less apologetically. The relations of social life are recognized, but almost as a necessary evil. Emancipation from these things seems to be the goal, which is little less or more than the Nirvana of Buddha. By what right may we discount the work of God's wise creation? But what authority do we minify the importance of nature's demands for the procreation and preservation of life? On what legitimate ground dare we ignore the upkeep of the temple of God in its individual and social capacity? This is but one of the evils of an aggravated individualism in religion. It is out of place in this generation. The whole of life is sacred, the whole body subject to sanctification, expression rather than repression the law of the kingdom. The only thing to be excised is the selfish will that opposes the righteous will of God. Food tastes sweeter when from His hand. Love glows more tenderly and has a broader sweep, and withal is purer and less selfish when inspired by Him. The body becomes a thing of wonderment and beauty, health and pleasure a duty, and life a far more glorious thing with Him supreme. No apology need be made for Christ the bread-and-butter God.

Inasmuch

Two spirits arrived from the regions of light
To study mankind in the thick of the fight,
And bear back to heaven what message they could,
That told aught of man,—the bad with the good.
One spirit was Truth, and the other was Love,—
Both born of one parent,—Jehovah above.

Descended to earth they parted their ways.
Truth flew to the temples and houses of praise,
But Love hied him forth where the masses were found,
Where of worship and prayer there was seldom a sound.
They listened and looked as they wandered about,
And at length back to glory were received with a shout.

Truth bowed very lowly before Heaven's throne,
And said, "Gracious Master, whose glory we own,
As thy servant flew out on the heaven's wide air
And looked here and there in the houses of prayer,
I found many seekers thy pleasure to know;
But, Oh, what confusion! They disagreed so!"

The Saviour looked down with a sigh and a tear,
For the discord of Christians was painful to hear.
"Oh, why do they waste precious hours away,
And call me 'Lord! Lord!' but do not what I say?"
He turned from his messenger Truth, as he stood,
And said, "Spirit Love, can'st tell aught that is good?"

Then Love bowed him low, and worshipped his Lord,
While the hosts hovered near, not to miss the least word.
And he told how in need's dreadful hour and fear
There sprang from the hearts of men courage and cheer,
For each in disaster felt himself share a part
And he took home his neighbour's woe straight to his heart.

The Master sat silent, but a smile 'gan to play
O'er the features once marred to turn night into day.
And he said to the servant who bore the great keys,—
"Just listen a moment,—and don't forget, please!
Inasmuch as they've done it to even these least
They have done it to me. Invite them to my feast!"

Then the heavens rang out with a shout and acclaim,
And they sang "Allelujah!" to the Deity's name;
For at last it was shown the best service to God
Is that where the hearts of men wander abroad,
And seeing the brother or sister distressed,
Give the cup of cold water, and in giving are blest.

From which is appended the conclusion rare,
That not in the voicing of oft spoken prayer,
But rather in sensing the need of the race,
And in meeting that need, may we gain a place
That will rank with the saints that have gone to their rest,
And lean like St. John on the dear Master's breast.

3. *Stretching the Commissariat*

There is a touching note in this whole story. Imagination is tempted to indulge in a bit of wildness. Who was the little lad who had the meager lunch? What were the home influences that made such provision for his need? Did the lad surrender his lunch without a protest? What became of him in later years? Tradition should have made of him one of the great characters of the early church. But alas, we know nothing more of him than just this,—it was his lunch plus that saved the day.

As we read the story a sense of uneasiness steals over us. Those disciples were practical men. They were men of business who knew the value of a penny. With rapid eye they had sized up the crowd and saw instantly that even a morsel apiece would far exceed their exchequer. Dismiss the crowd, and let them return to their homes. It is fine to be generous, but reason has its limits. And besides, these men were now in a position to advise the head of their group. Were they not also healers of the sick, and exorcisers of demons? Had not they, too, done a bit of preaching with satisfactory results? Indeed, what could the Master be meaning

when he said: "Give ye them to eat?" And the disciples were right,—that is, mostly right. They had all of the elements of the situation in hand and in right relation, except one. They had forgotten him. Like the cook who attempted to make the cake, all the ingredients were there except the flour. But because they had forgotten him they were altogether wrong.

The suspicion flits across our minds that these disciples were the ancestors of our official boards and executive bodies of to-day. They come of good stock. The apostolic succession may be more comprehensive than some branches of historic Christianity would make us believe. But their eyesight is defective. They do not see him! They think of his name, and his ministry in days past is beclouded with a misty vagueness. They forget that he is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Indeed, the pronoun "we" should be substituted for "they" in all the foregoing.

There was a little lad in the crowd. God forgive us for overlooking the lads and lassies. They are more important than we think. There is hope for them. There was a little lad in the temple centuries before, but that lad heard the voice of God and came to be a redeemer of his people. There was a little lass likewise centuries before, and a slave-lass at that, in the home of Naaman, but God used her mightily. There was another lad in the temple more recently and his questions and answers astounded the learned doctors. And there was another little child whom the Master held before the disciples and of whom he said that they must become as that child if they would understand kingdom affairs. We must not ignore the lads.

And that lad was the keeper of the commissary! He didn't know it, nor did they. But he was. Five loaves and two fishes! Five biscuits or crackers, and a couple

of salt herring! A fellow must be hungry to enjoy that! But what lad in health isn't hungry? A lot of running and exercising, busy with a thousand interests, eager to go with the crowd,—a healthy boy would not be squeamish. That was just a good appetizer for him. But "what are they among so many?" But as we have seen, they had forgotten him.

And the scanty fare placed in the Master's hands becomes a feast for the multitude fit for kings. We cannot explain how it happened. It just happened! As the loaves and fishes lay in his hands he broke off a bit of each and gave it to Peter, and as he went Peter was really a bit surprised that the Master had given him so much. Would there be any left for the others? Yet the amount in Jesus' hands did not seem to have diminished. There was nothing spectacular about it. But each of the twelve found that he had considerable more than he had thought,—possibly enough for himself for a snack. And he breaks off a bit and hands it to this hungry man, and another bit for that hungry woman with a crying babe on her breast, and another bit for that overgrown and awkward lad. But as they ate they had enough, and the supply was not exhausted. Oh, why try to explain a miracle? It can't be done. We may do one of two things. Accept the account or reject it. If we do the former we are but classifying this event with the mysteries of life, of birth, of growth, of all the phases of it. It is no argument against the reality of a thing that it is mysterious. Indeed the argument would be against the reality if there were nothing mysterious about it. Or, we may reject it. And when we do that the birds stop singing, and the sun stops shining, and the melodies cease in the soul, and the poetry dries up in the heart, and love becomes but a physical and nervous reaction, and mother love is robbed of its beauty, and

patriotism dies,—and nothing is left but just to wait for the undertaker! That is the logical outcome if one would be thoroughly consistent. But, then, few of us lay claim to being that!

Stretching the commissariat! It all depends on the hands into which it is placed. God can do more with the humble gift of a willing lad than with the carefully calculated munificence of the wealthy. It all lies in the plus sign. Five loaves and two fishes plus Christ! And above five thousand are fed. At the best most of us have but five loaves and two fishes, and what are these among so many? But let us place them in the right hands, then stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

4. Let Nothing Be Lost

There we have one of the watch-words of the kingdom. Waste is of evil. Waste is but misuse or non-use. Things are here for the using. God is the God of creation, and of conservation. Surely, if waste was ever justified it was justified on this occasion. Had not the five loaves and two fishes served their purpose? What more could be asked? Had not the five thousand been fed? Let the birds and the beasts pick up the remnants. But, not so. Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost. And there were twelve basketfuls of food for another day and for other hunger.

Conservation is the law of the kingdom. More especially is it the conservation of that most priceless thing, the souls of men. The wreckage along life's shore is astounding. Hearts, hopes, happiness, homes, health all wrecked and battered mark the path. Whatever is connected with the life that is normal is subject to the conserving ministry of Christ and his church. Salvaging the wreckage is part of the task. Saving life from wreck

is the major part. These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Have we yet caught the vision of a redeemed world? It is a vision that might well thrill the heart of the seer.

A word is in order as we note the application of this point to the life of to-day in relation to the world's material need. Well-meaning folk are guilty of the sin of wastefulness. Unnecessary self-indulgence, over-eating, waste of food that is uneaten, all goes to swell the total of sin on the part of a self-indulgent nation. We have bread enough and to spare, and vast areas of the world look on in hunger and starvation. Great sections of Europe are starving. The heathen world knows little but hunger. And we waste food! We waste the means of procuring food. In a thousand ways we squander what might well be transmuted into bread for hungry mouths, and life for hungry souls. God will not quickly forgive our wilfullness in thus sinning. Conservation was adopted by the nation as a war measure. With a modification it might well be continued as a world measure.

Nothing less than the recognition of the claims of stewardship will bring us to the place of service and power. God's universal ownership of material wealth and people, our responsibility of stewardship in managing the possessions of the world to His glory, our recognition of the claims of humanity upon us,—all is necessary before we can look for the divine approval. There is a vast difference between niggardliness and frugality. Sowing bountifully is quite consistent with gathering up the fragments. Generosity walks hand in hand with stewardship. A soul in partnership with God cannot be selfish, and that makes him generous and robs his carefulness of penuriousness.

Hence we hie us down from the mountain of hunger. Our sympathy for hungry folk has grown as we realize that the Lord who made stomachs made provision for their feeding. And we are His agents in meeting this need.

XIX

A MOUNTAIN OF PRAYER

Matthew 14:22-33

THE identity of the mountain of prayer is obscure. It was adjacent to the mountain of hunger, one of the hills surrounding the sea of Galilee. From a material standpoint mountains are much the same. They vary in altitude, but their resemblance are more than their differences. It is the association that lends them greatest charm. Names mean little except as they recall associations. It is the fact that Jesus went into the mountains to pray, that gives them added interest to us. With him let us climb the mountain of prayer. The most mountainous man was a lover of nature, a frequenter of mountains, who so combined the natural world with the spiritual life as to show them both from the hand of the same Father-God. We have been with him in the mountains of temptation, of blessing, of hunger, and now we go with him again to the mountains as the scene of heavenly communion.

There is always place for another dissertation on prayer. The subject is inexhaustible, and is the most vital to the church to-day. It is likewise the most ignored among Christian people to-day. Any new contribution that will incite people to pray will be timely. Any repetition of former truths that will revive the sluggish soul will be in order. There are all kinds of theories and perplexities about the place and use of prayer. But the fact remains of paramount importance to the genuine Christian that Jesus believed in prayer. It had a tremendously important place in his life, and we see him in

the spirit and attitude of prayer more often than in any other.

The uniqueness of Christ's life has been witnessed by both friend and foe. The secret of that life was the spirit of prayer. Neither his miraculous birth, nor his miraculous power can account for it. It is in the prayer life the miracle lay. It was the source of his power. All else was secondary to it. Cut this and the tap-root of his ministry is destroyed. Whatever the nature of his birth, had he neglected the exercise of prayer he would have proved as weak as we are.

It is worth our while to note when, where, and how he prayed. He went to prayer after he had sent the multitude away, even as before this he had spent the night in prayer, previous to choosing the twelve. What was the significance of this act? The Nazarene had been giving out of his vitality and spiritual life to the hungry multitude until his soul was exhausted. That was his principle in life,—to give himself. It is very easy to give something as a substitute for one's self, and that is what most of us do. We give money instead of consecration. We give a little time and strength instead of a life of service. We are so reluctant when it comes to giving ourselves that it is only to those we love that we fully give of our very life. And no work so counts for the kingdom as that in which one sweats blood. Christ felt this exhaustion. We read on another occasion that he perceived that virtue had gone out of him. It was at such times that he betook himself to prayer.

He went up into the mountain to pray. It was not in the busy temple. Religion may be a hindrance to faith. Art glass may shut out the real God. Stuffy atmosphere may even asphyxiate the soul. He went up into a mountain. Too much of our religion is man-made. It has the stamp of creed and denomination upon it. The de-

cisions of councils and conclusions of conferences are not necessarily a means of grace. The soul must be stripped bare before the Creator-God, and He will speak through His myriad voices of nature as well as through the voices of the soul. He sought the mountains because He was a mountain character,—the highest peak of them all. He who read the gospel message in the lilies of the field and the life of the winged folk, got closest to the heart of God out in God's world.

And when evening was come he was there alone. We believe in the communion of saints, but we also believe in the prayer in the secret place. There must be fellowship with one another if we would really help one another to work out our salvation. But there must be the quiet hour and the secret place, or we will become confused and mistake the voices of men for the voice of God. The inner chamber is indispensable to the victorious life, even though that inner chamber be on the side of some mountain where the breezes softly sing through the tree tops, and the birds chant the anthems of worship. There are secrets none must share with you and God. He alone has the right to hear your heart-longings. He alone need know your confessions of defeat. It is He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High that abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

There is little call at this juncture to seek to justify the habit of prayer. Its very spontaneity is in its favor. The soul instinctively prays. Not always wisely nor effectively, but yet it prays. And it is through prayer that the soul comes to its best expression. Indeed its truest expression is its prayer. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts." Weakness changes to strength in prayer, and ignorance receives a baptism of wisdom that solves the intricate problems of life. Our task is to bring a whole new vista before the eyes of the char-

acter in formation, which vista is seen alone from the mountain of prayer.

1. Where Earth and Sky Meet.

It is not altogether a delusion that the mountains touch the sky. All of them point that way, but some of them actually reach it. It is so with the mountain of blessing, and of transfiguration. It was so with the mountain of law and of glory. It is so with the mountain of prayer. At the summit of this altitude heaven and earth join hands in holy wedlock.

> "There, there on eagle wings we soar,
> And sin and sense molest no more;
> And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
> While glory crowns the mercy seat."

It is ardently to be hoped that the development of the scientific mind will not dislodge the poetic tendency of childlike faith. We look aloft to see the dwelling place of God which faith locates in the far reaches of the sky. To look up is to aspire, and in prayer we look up. The conception is spiritually accurate however faulty it may prove in a scientific analysis. Let us insist upon it,—wise-acres notwithstanding,—that the sky does touch the earth, not on the horizon, but on the mountain top. On the mountain of prayer we get closest to God.

It is all important that earth and sky should meet. Earth cannot get along alone. It has been trying it for many years and a sad mess of things is the result. Visions of high ideals have but tantalized the earth-bound. The soul reaches out, confident that it is related to the divine, and aspiring for the realization of its divine possibilities. The hunger of the soul,—the *heim-weh* of the spirit,—is the most hopeful thing about man. There is a strong upward tug. But there is likewise a strong downward

pull. The soaring soul starts aloft to new heights but to feel the backpull of the fetters of the flesh. We cannot disengage our souls from the houses in which we live. And there are times when the disappointment is indeed keen. What then?

> "Ah, whither could we flee for aid,
> When tempted, desolate, dismayed;
> Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
> Had suffering saints no mercy seat?"

It is on the mountain of prayer that the soul lifts the body into touch with ideals and the mortal body is quickened by the Spirit that dwelleth in us.

It is quite important, too, from heaven's standpoint that earth and sky should meet. Else, why the incarnation? Else, why the divine commission to humanity to establish the kingdom on earth? The skies become quite as hungry for earth, as earth for the skies. God depends upon us. God's heart broods over us. God would again tabernacle among men, and clothe Himself in human flesh. It is a thought full of comfort that heaven has been wooing earth longer and more ardently than earth has sought heaven. Such is the mystery of grace!

It is on the summit of the mountain of prayer the Church must be builded. Too long has it sought the fashionable boulevards, and the shady valleys. An interceding church alone can join hands with an interceding Christ and with the interceding Comforter for human redemption. With the destiny of a world in her hands she needs the point of closest contact with the source of infinite power. Of herself she is the weakest of impotent things. Divided over non-essentials, manned by human beings, embarrassed by the magnitude of her mission and the insignificance of her program, it is a sad day for the

world when the church of the living God locates elsewhere than on the mountain of prayer. She has her own human limitations to offset. She has the constant defilement of the earth-earthy to wash away. She has the mistaken policy of short-sighted and self-seeking enthusiasts to combat. Who is sufficient unto these things? And here we find the explanation of our weakness. We are not located on the mountain of prayer. An agony does not grip us for our sins and failures and for the lostness of the world. Compromise has marked our contact with the world. We have tried organization, advertising, music, oratory, ice-cream socials, etc., but have used little prayer. We have chosen our officials because they were men of business rather than men of prayer. And the suspicion enters in that the choice of a pastor depends less upon his living on the mountain of prayer than upon social and executive qualifications.

"Stir me, O stir me, Lord, I care not how,
But stir my heart in passion for the world!
Stir me to give, to go, but most to pray:
Stir till the blood-red banner is unfurled
O'er lands that still in heathen darkness lie,
O'er desert where no cross is lifted high.

Stir me, O stir me, Lord, till prayer is pain—
Till prayer is joy, till prayer turns to praise.
Stir me till heart and will and mind,—yea, all
Is wholly thine, to use through all the days.
Stir till I learn to pray exceedingly,
Stir till I learn to wait expectantly.

Stir me, O stir me, Lord. Thy heart was stirred
By love's intensest fire, till Thou didst give
Thine only Son, thy best beloved One,
Even to the dreadful cross that I might live.
Stir me to give myself so back to thee
That Thou canst give Thyself again through me.

Stir me, O stir me, Lord, for I can see
Thy glorious triumph-day begin to break!
The dawn already gilds the eastern sky.
O Christians arise! Awake! Awake!
O stir us, Lord, as heralds of that day,
For night is past—Our King is on His way."

2. *Water-Power for Milling Purposes*

Just because the mountain of prayer touches the sky, and comes in close touch with the very throne of God, it affords a means whereby the stream of life that flows beneath the throne may be directed to earth, and its power employed in meeting the needs of man. It becomes a mountain stream growing in momentum as it approaches the valley levels, and it comes with the refreshing ministry of divine grace. When properly released it contains power to turn the wheels of human life and minister to the multifarious needs of man. All of which is but a roundabout way of saying that prayer has divine power to affect the lives of men.

It is to be feared that the general prayerlessness and indifference of the great number of nominal Christians is due to a loss of faith. What may lie back of that loss of faith is somewhat problematical. Possibly it is the attempt to rationalize the efficacy of prayer. Like vivisection, the patient or victim dies in the experiment. Notwithstanding a crude belief in the power of prayer, regardless of the object sought, a note of doubt has crept into much of our religious thinking. We discuss the benefits of prayer, to discern whether they are subjective or objective. Most of us agree that there are subjective benefits, but few make wider claims. And the subjective interpretation lends itself to the cultivation of a good-natured neglect of the habit until it quite ceases to be a habit or even an act. From all of this we must return to faith and the exercise of prayer if we would accomplish

our mission. Otherwise heart-breaking and disgraceful defeat await us.

It is a gratuitous task to undertake to recall the promises of power associated with prayer. The Bible is replete with them. The limitless resources of heaven are at the disposal of him who learns to pray effectively. The men of the Bible believed tremendously in the value of prayer. Possibly it had better be thus expressed,—they believed tremendously in God whom they approached in the attitude of prayer. The important thing about it is not the phrase or expression but the contact. A life, a mind open to the divine will and power, seeking less to persuade than to be used, subjected in all details to the overmastering Will of God,—this becomes a factor in the divine government of the world that cannot be forgotten. It is so that prayer releases power.

The psychological possibilities of prayer open up a field for discussion for which we are not yet prepared. There is a scientific challenge to the employment of this power, even though its *modus operandi* is not fully understood. If psychology may be called an exact science, the possibilities of prayer which lie within this realm call for experimentation until humanity tastes the benefits that are to be derived through this channel. The claims of psychical research have been heard by scientific minds, and were not beneath the notice of William James and Sir Oliver Lodge. Edison hints at the possibility of communication with spirits by the means of science. But here, in the hands of the church, for two millenniums, has lain a power with some known results in the field of experiment, yet neglected and ignored, if not treated with open contempt, by those of a scientific mind. Fairness and honesty demand a trial. The challenge is no less scientific than has been the challenge of wireless communication between distant points. As high an honour

will belong to him who rescues prayer from more or less plausible theory and converts it into beneficial fact as has devolved upon the discoverers and inventors who have proved benefactors to the race.

We are reduced to one of two positions. The claims of Christianity are false and preposterous, or the claims of prayer deserve recognition. If Christ ascended the mountain of prayer it was in the interest of the same interceding ministry as engages him in his glory. He was possessed of power through the unbroken connections he maintained with the Father. The power of prayer is but the power of God released through open channels. The healing ministry of the Master centered in this power. His miraculous power was but the expression of the will of God. It was the open channel for the divine life that blessed men. Otherwise, Jesus was misled in his belief in prayer, and we do ill to follow him. Nineteen centuries have shown the fallacy of this conclusion. A revival is needed throughout Christendom,—and this must be a revival of prayer.

3. The Eloquence of Silence

It is a mistaken idea that while on the mountain of prayer we must be in continuous or frequent expression. Impression rather than expression should characterize our stay. Not a negative attitude, but a submissive acquiescence in harmony with the divine plan there revealed. Possibly one of the reasons for impotence in prayer is the volubility of our part in it. We show little recognition of the eternal fitness of things when we reduce prayer to a species of beggary. We have little contribution to make to the will and wisdom of God. Nothing we could suggest would be worth much. In the presence of our betters, attention rather than much speak-

ing is fitting. In the presence of God well may we take to heart the word of the Holy Spirit—

"Be still and know that I am God."

The silences of Jesus are most suggestive. For thirty years little is known of his life. A bare mention of his beginning, a mere suggestion of his youth, and the indirect testimony of his occupation, and that is all. But how important and wonderful those years must have been! The teachings and ministry of three years are compressed into a brief half-day's reading. His silences are indeed eloquent. Those hours spent in prayer,—how we would like to penetrate their privacy and hear what he said to the Father! But no,—rather was he concerned in learning what the Father would say to him. In silence do we go beneath the surface and discover our real selves and find our real help.

The distinction between noise and power is not often clear. The much-speaking, whether in volume or in quantity, is not a certainty when it comes to getting results. Experience has taught us that a one or two cylinder machine will make more noise than a high powered car. But much of our praying is of the two cylinder type. It is only ignorance that makes the confusion. Most power is silent. The power that "holds all nature up" is silent. The power that turns rain and sunshine and earth elements into stalwart oaks is silent. It was said of the Lord's servant that he would not cry aloud nor lift up his voice. If we would resemble him more closely, we must learn the secret of the power of his silences.

Thus would we emphasize the duty of the quiet hour. A time for meditation and prayer, when the soul waits only on the Lord, for her expectation is from Him. It is not always that God will speak, yet the silence of waiting upon Him is itself restful and inspiring. God is not al-

ways speaking, especially in the audible voice. The still small voice does not keep up a perpetual noise. A word thrown upon the screen of the praying heart will contain a whole volume of truth. Meditation is mastication. Just to tarry, tarry, keeping silence before Him, mind at rest, heart reaching out with the prayer "uttered or unexpressed" of "speak, Lord, for thy servant listens,"—this is prayer. This means renewal of strength. This means right adjustments and proper proportions. This means scales removed from the eyes. This means to learn the mind of Christ.

The worded prayer has its place as a means of grace. It belongs to the prayer that is habit formed. But real prayer, eloquent in its silences, is

> "the breath of God in man,
> Ascending whence it came."

The worded prayer becomes a scaffolding within which the real edifice of a life of prayer is raised. The silences of the soul make possible the absorption of the life into the life of God. Our weary nerves need a rest. Our minds need relief. Our souls are played upon by too many hands. Our lives are dissipated over a thousand superficialities and we grow weak and thin. It is time for the secret place, and for the attentive ear. It is time for the soul to trustfully rely upon the goodness that never faileth, and on the wisdom that endureth to the end. Confidence in God's wisdom, trust in His power, surrender to His love,—and the prayer life is complete. This is to walk in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

4. Breezes from the Mountains

The frequenter of mountain heights becomes speedily aware of a change of air. The atmosphere is rarefied, purer and more refreshing. So different is it from the

smoke-laden and germ-infested atmosphere of the haunts of men. If only the breezes from the mountains could sweep through the valleys and bear away the miasma of the lowlands! And that is what prayer is intended to do.

One of the sad results of our relative neglect of prayer is the infecting of the mountain dweller with the poisons of the valley. Our Christians are in the world and quite of the world. The sin-laden atmosphere breathed by all contaminates the soul, and the power of moral resistance is lessened. We come to think that there is nothing better than the foul atmosphere and sooty air we are accustomed to breathe. We breathe it in and it poisons our blood. Our feet are slow to follow the holy gleam. "Our souls how heavily they go to reach eternal joys!" And defeat marks our trail. We lose our ideals, and our hopes become indistinct. We call it "the great disillusionment." The trouble is, we have tarried too long in the valley.

It is God's plan that we breathe the rarefied atmosphere of the heights of the mountain of prayer early each morning, and thus not only enter the duties of life with our souls revived, but bringing the perfume-laden atmosphere of paradise with us so that the valley dwellers may get a breath of it, and hunger for the heights. Oh, the poison that diseases the souls of men! The passions and lusts, the blasphemies and hates, the filth and selfishness of men,—how they have defiled the very atmosphere of life! Like the foul odours of an open sewer drifting into the drawing room of culture, so the presence of the foul fiend has brought with it the noxious odours of hell. Like a poisoned gas it permeates the sanctity of the sanctuary, it penetrates the confines of the home, it seeps into the very tissues of life itself! The tragedy is that most of us have become so used to

it that we fail to perceive it, the while it is destroying our very life. But a step toward the mountain is attended with the fresh breath of spring. Ascent to the heights brings to the soul the completer joy of life. We breathe deeply, and are made new again. Life has a new meaning. Health courses through our veins. The blood pumps with a joy that we hadn't known before. We thought we were living before, but we see now that it was but the grinning mockery of dying. This is life, away on the mountain top, close to heaven, breathing pure air, catching glimpses of the meaning of life, and acquiescing to the all-wise will of the Creator!

Back to the valley we trend our way, but we carry the atmosphere with us as we go. And men take knowledge of us that we have walked with God, and have been in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. They see a new meaning and measure to life, and as they see a new hope is borne, and a new faith is formed, and a new beginning is made, and the angels in heaven rejoice over another repentant sinner, and the work of the kingdom moves on.

XX

A MOUNTAIN OF TRANSFIGURATION

Matthew 17:1-8

ANOTHER mountain ascent with Christ, the mountain man. This time we penetrate into the very holy of holies. Like the apostle, we are privileged to behold things unlawful for a man to utter. But the possibility of seeing depends less upon the vision unfolded than upon the faculty of spiritual seeing. We ascend the mountain of transfiguration, but it remains to be seen what our eyes shall behold.

The text tells us that "after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them." The expression is significant. Six days after what? And why this statement of the lapse of time? What bearing had it all upon the event of the transfiguration? A hasty review recalls the question Jesus directed to his disciples, as to whom men understood him to be, and Peter's declaration: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The moment was critical and pregnant. A crisis had been reached, and a climax attained. For this spontaneous declaration of an original discovery the Lord had waited. And now, the hour has come when it is safe to let the slow gathering conviction crystallize into testimony. The transfiguration came at a time when the disciples were ready to receive it. Visions are not prematurely imparted. Subjective conditions must be met before objective facts can be understood. And God does not hurry. The modern psychologist would be

tempted to arrange such a divine disclosure immediately on the heels of a statement such as Peter made. But God cares little for the psychologist's methods. He has better ways of dealing with souls. Six days elapse. The testimony may have been more or less forgotten. Yet the conviction had flowered. Now the chosen three are to be initiated into the mysteries of their discovery. God was to add His seal to their declaration.

It is bootless to ask the explanation of Jesus' choice of friends. Unwisely we frequently reduce all the race to a common level in the affections of the Christ. We decry the possibility of partiality, but we lose sight of certain facts, borne out by science and experience. There are laws governing the strength of attraction between bodies. Shall kindred laws be denied in the interrelations of souls? The element of capacity likewise enters in. Peter, and James, and John were unique. There was a response immediate and instinctive to the person and program of Jesus. Here was fertile soil. By no means alike, yet each was a chosen vessel to his Lord. The other disciples may have equalled or even exceeded them in many ways,—but these men were open to Jesus. And who can define friendship? It cannot be forced. It must be natural and spontaneous. There is an inner circle to which only the elect are entitled to enter. Outside there are states of blessedness, but none so rare as within. Yea, and states of suffering and denial to which the outer circle must remain stranger. The fellowship of suffering is antecedent to real perception and understanding. Here has lain much of the real glory of martyrdom. They became members of the inner circle with Peter, James and John.

No event in the life of the Master stands out alone. All are so interwoven and permeated with the same spirit that each stands in the relation to what precedes

much in the relation of effect to cause. His life and ministry was not a series of events strung together by chance. Rather was it a tree with roots firmly planted, and with limbs and branches developed from the trunk, on which the fruit was borne. And now that life is nearing its culmination. Spring gives promise of harvest, and now the ministry of many months is producing results which are ripening fast. What will speedily transpire becomes increasingly certain. The mountain of transfiguration stands vitally related to the mountain of prayer and the mountain of crosses. With reverent tread we ascend its slopes praying withal that our eyes may be open to see and to understand.

1. *A Unique Transparency*

The nature of the transfiguration must be a matter of perennial interest and contemplation. That we can arrive at a complete and satisfactory explanation is improbable. There are mysteries here that surpass our comprehension. But it is possible that a glimpse of his glory may interpret itself partially to our understanding. Was it a glory reflected from the open heavens? Or was it a glory bursting through the veil of the flesh? On the conclusion at which we arrive must depend much of our interpretation of the nature of Jesus.

The advent of the Roentgen ray has given us an illustration. What was impervious to light has now yielded in part to this strange and intense light. Bodies that were opaque are now transparent until the inner conditions are scientifically revealed. Let us imagine a light, spiritual rather than physical, burning within a soul until the very flesh becomes transparent. Nor need we hesitate here. The effect of the mind upon the body, while not clearly defined, has been proved beyond controversy. The halo is not entirely a creature of the

imagination. God quickens the mortal body by His spirit that dwells within. And as He quickens He glorifies.

But the revelation requires not only the light but the sensitive plate. It is only in the mountain, apart with Him, and engaged in communion, that the glory is revealed. There comes a state when thus engaged when one scarcely knows whether he is in the body or out of the body. The disciples were transported to that realm of spiritual apperception in which they were incapable of distinguishing the spiritual from the material. A thousand revelations of glory pass unrecorded because no plate has been so sensitized as to take the impression.

The transfiguration presupposes the incarnation. Within the opaque body of the Nazarene abode a light surpassing all human brilliance. None before and none since has approximated it. This was not the only time the real Christ stood revealed. Paul saw him in his transcendent glory as he appeared to him on the Damascus road. Stephen in the agonies of death was wrapt in ecstasy as he beheld him seated at the right hand of God. And John saw him thus again as on Patmos Isle the revelation was accorded him.

It is true that others have been transfigured. Moses descending from the mountain of glory wist not that his face shone, but he had to veil his countenance before the people could approach him. Stephen's face became as it were the face of an angel as the glory of the revealed Christ burst upon him. But there was this difference. These men, and others, have shone by reflection,—beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. But the transfiguration of Jesus was none other than a glory hidden in the incarnation breaking through the bands of the flesh until a spiritual light suffused all his being, even to the very clothes that he wore.

It borders on irreverence to seek illustrations, yet who has not seen the face of an unbeautiful woman transfigured with love in the state of motherhood? Who has not seen the glory of sacrifice shining through the face of heroism and revealing even in common clay the hidden spark divine? It is said that Lincoln was the homeliest of men, yet there were times when a glory of tenderness and idealism shone through and he, too, was transfigured before those who were enough in affinity with his soul to catch the glimpse. But the pardon of the reader is asked. What comparison has the sparkling dew drop with the glory of an evening sky, or of a mountain sunrise? These men have revealed the hidden fires of the soul. His was the bursting forth of that light which marked the first work of creation, the self-expression of Him Who is light, and in Whom is no darkness at all.

Possibly the Greek can help us out a bit here. It says that he was "metamorphosed" before them. Metamorphosed is an uncommon term, used to describe a transformation. Mythology and folk-lore are full of it. The erstwhile beggar is immediately transformed into a prince. The stone image is metamorphosed into a living, breathing, loving, thinking person. The animal is metamorphosed into another animal or into a man. These are but illustrations of the use the word acquired. But in all the underlying thought is the change of form.

We must remember that notwithstanding Peter's confession, Jesus was still a human being, though of larger dimension of soul than the rest. It is open to debate how far removed the disciples were from this human interpretation of his personality. To them the outshining of the inner light and glory was none other than the transformation of a man into a God in their presence. They had not accorded him divine worship before. But

now they fall upon their faces in great fear. For the first time the mystery of the incarnation begins really to grip them. A slowly gathering conviction crystallizes into a knowledge which in time will interpret the crucifixion and the resurrection, and which together with the Spirit's baptism will enable them to face the fires of persecution undaunted.

Here then we have it later from the pen of the unknown author of Hebrews. He was the effulgence, or shining forth, of God's glory, and the very image, or essence, of God's substance. And whenever the human Jesus known to history gives way to the glorified Son of the Father apprehended in spiritual experience as great a transfiguration will have taken place before the eyes of the soul as transpired before the three disciples on the high mountain so many centuries ago. Spiritual things are only spiritually discerned.

Many another transfiguration awaits the seeking soul. One vision of glory cannot exhaust the divine subject. And in the process of beholding these transfigurations we, too, shall be changed from glory to glory.

2. A Poor Place to Build Tabernacles

The liberation of the soul is a slow and painful process. With some it is never completed. Spiritual experiences must be clothed in material forms that the common mind may enjoy them. There is still need to speak to the children of the kingdom in parables. We know, or fancy that we do, the things of time and place which make their appeal to the senses. We want to reduce the things of the spirit to tangibles, notwithstanding that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." We need crutches on which to make our sluggish way to reach eternal joys. Communion with the heart of God depends upon

"means" of grace. Immediate approach seems difficult if not impossible. All of which may help us to appreciate Peter a little more sympathetically.

And who, pray, would not fain tarry on the mountain of vision? It is a great place and a wonderful experience. It does not come often in a lifetime. Its frequency depends upon obedience to visions previously received. "Make the most of the opportunity," thought Peter. "Who knows of the to-morrows? This present is good enough for us. Lord, let us make three tabernacles, or tiny sheltering booths, in which you and your heavenly visitants may rest and refresh yourselves." And, we are pleased to note, that his suggestion met with nothing but kindly understanding at the hands of his Master. How slow we are to grasp the things of the soul! And how patient God is with us! And of course the Lord knew the underlying courtesy of his man, for there was no thought of protection from the hot Syrian sun so far as these three rugged sons of toil were concerned.

But the mountain of transfiguration is a poor place to build tabernacles. We would fain draw out the pleasure and thrill of mountain-top experience. But God knows best. The weak frame cannot endure it. Just a glimpse now, is all these finite natures can endure. The ineffable glory is such that man cannot gaze upon it unblinded, nor expose himself to it long and live. God modifies his revelations to our capacity, and gradually develops the ability to see and endure more. Oh, it is a mercy that God tempers the brightness of the vision to our weak eyes! It is a marvel of grace that in His good time death will make possible the clothing upon our souls with the spiritual body with its amplified powers of perception and enjoyment. It is wise for us to be satisfied with the visions imparted, and not allow

an intemperate and immoderate craving for more. The days of apprenticeship must be finished before we can pass to be master workmen with God.

How often our pious propositions meet with firm but kindly refusal! It is said of Peter that he made his suggestion, not knowing what he was saying. He meant it well. And Christ took his meaning rather than his wording. There was another favourite of his God who wanted to build Him a temple, but his suggestion was refused because his hands were bloodstained. And yet to him came the word: "Nevertheless, it was well that thou hadst it in thine heart to build a temple unto me." Our ambitions exceed our possibilities. Our ideals beckon us on, but the limitations of nature impede our progress. We often look upon these unfulfilled aspirations with a sense of bitter failure. We have much to learn. The poet had learned it when he wrote:

"For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale."

A word of warning here! We may cripple our possibilities by bemoaning too bitterly our impossibilities. We are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly according as God hath given to every one of us a proportion of faith. Peter's life was by no means a failure because what seemed to him preeminently desirable was utterly impracticable. Success is not in things done, but in character acquired. The potter has in mind a vessel meet for his use. The scaffolding is not the house. Too often we make this confusion.

3. Why Visions Are Given

It is Luke who tells us the topic of conversation with which Christ and his celestial visitants were engaged. It was his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. In another connection we have spoken of this unique phrasing. That decease was to be looked upon as a distinct accomplishment which was to climax the whole of his career. It had its place in the schedule of God, and could not be obviated without the crash of the whole plan. It was to be the post of honour, and the feat of bravery, by which strategic move the armies of hell were to be defeated. It was going to be painful, and tragic because of its loneliness, yet it was the point on which the issue between light and darkness hung. It was to be looked upon as a master stroke by which mastery over the world and the hearts of men was to come to the Master of men.

We get things sadly confused. We think of joyful experiences as given to us for the mere sake of enjoying them. We are tempted to sing

> "My willing soul would stay
> In such a frame as this,
> And sit and sing herself away
> To everlasting bliss."

All of which is very well occasionally, but can be strangely overdone. Visions are imparted to nerve us for the difficult tasks ahead. God is not prodigal. For every investment God expects commensurate returns. For every experience He expects service. For every mountain-top experience He calls to the brave endurance of hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We speak advisedly, but God is not nearly so concerned with joy as an end as He is with joy as an accompanying feature of faithful sacrifice and service. It is a misuse

of energy, a waste of material, and an outlay of values that is unjustified when the pleasure is held foremost. The joy of the Lord is the joy of the consciousness of obedience and accomplishment. Nothing less is worthy the child of God.

Thus it was that Jesus was prepared for the great ordeal which was also to prove the great opportunity of his life. That he shrank from it was but physically natural. But the spirit dominated the flesh, and he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. And lest one commiserate him on the fearfulness of this ordeal let him recall the interpretation the inspired writer gave when he said "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High." Let us not pity him. Rather let us pity ourselves who have not yet discovered a cause so great as to challenge our sacrifice. Or, greater still, let our self-commiseration be centered in the fact that having found a cause worthy of the sacrifice, we had not the courage to meet its challenge.

It is with him we have climbed this mountain of transfiguration. But some of us are seeing little because we are afraid to pay the price. There are great world problems that need solving. There are battles that must be waged. There is need for the outlay of money and time and life blood. There are wrongs to be righted, troubles to be adjusted, lives to be rescued and nurtured. It costs. The cost is tremendous. It means sleepless nights. It means furrowed brows. It means bent backs. It means the agony of prayer. It means death,—dying that indeed we may live. Who will pay the price? The price must be paid or the vision vanishes into thin air, and in the place of faith is doubt whether any other has seen the vision. In the place of warm-hearted interest

in the affairs of men comes a cynicism. And the soul sells its eternal birthright for a mess of pottage.

On the other hand here are men who have paid the price in consecration, to whom the vision has come. And these, single-handed and alone, except for the Divine One who never forsakes, have wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, changed the destinies of nations, enfranchised slaves, rescued the downtrodden, comforted the mourning, restored peace and faith and love in the earth, and have shown themselves blood-brothers with him who brought immortality to light through the gospel.

4. The Troubles of the Valley Folk

It would be time profitably spent to go into the exegesis of the passage before us. We would enjoy dwelling on the divine witness. "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." But we have dwelt here long enough. The vision will depart unless we hasten to the valley below. And what a spectacle we see! The other disciples have been engaged in a problem of practical and applied Christianity, while the more favoured ones tarried in the mountain of transfiguration. A father has brought his lunatic boy to them for healing. And though they had tried they had failed. Here is a pitiable sight! A broken-hearted father, an afflicted child, and an impotent group of disciples. Hitherto they have wrought miracles, but now their power has escaped them. What is to be done? Fortunately the Master returns 'ere it is too late. And the touch of the Master-hand puts wrong things right. Peter, and James, and John would fain have tarried on the mountain, but Jesus knew that the troubles of the valley folk were pressing. Their demand is the more imperative.

"Why could not we cast him out?" asked the per-

plexed disciples when the evil spirit had obeyed the Master's word. "This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting," was the reply. And here we have the divine reaction, if you please, to the impotence of modern Christianity. A sin-cursed and heart-hungry world has come to the church again and again for deliverance and help. In desperation and incredulity it has turned away again. Doubt as to our pretensions, unbelief in our sincerity marks its attitude toward nominal and professional Christianity. Why have we failed? "This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting." We know little about prayer and practice less. Instead of self-denial we have compromised, and fasting is not on our program. And like Samson shorn of his locks, we know not that our strength has departed. We sing

> "Earth has no sorrow
> That heaven cannot cure"

and continue on our way in sublime indifference for the unappeased hunger and the demon-tormented masses about us. A convention or two, a survey or two, a pious sigh,—and we pass by on the other side. What an indictment against the people of God! We are content with patching up a few scratches, and we ignore the broken hearts, the bruised heads, and diseased bodies except to draw away lest we be contaminated. Indeed, this is the safest policy unless we will pray and fast. But when true prayer and true self-denial will mark our conduct, the day will come nearer when sorrow and sin shall be done away, and the hand of God will wipe away all tears from human eyes.

We are not belittling the fineness of the modern Christian. He is respectable, high class, moral, and delightful in many ways. But he is impotent, and he scarcely realizes,—thanks to a false idealism,—that he

is expected to take a hand in setting things to rights. What more is needed, if he but save his soul? It is time we have done with self-centered Christian profession. The soul that is content with having been saved, and has no passion for the saving of society, is not worth saving, and it is a question whether indeed he has been saved, notwithstanding the pious thrills he may enjoy. There are valley folk, and they have troubles, and while the disciples would fain tarry in enjoyment of the unique experience the while their fellows below are endeavouring without success to meet the world's need, the Master feels the pull of aching hearts, and he leaves the mountain of transfiguration and the company of Moses and Elijah, and where there is sorrow there we find him, and with healing in his hands.

The painting entitled "The Presence," served as an inspiration for the following lines which portray the thought we have sought to express.

The Presence

"The hour had come. The bell from out the tower tall
Of Cathedral grey had sounded, calling men to mass:
And in response from out the homes of rich and poor
Human streamlets poured and joined in a mighty river
Which sought its rest in the ocean of grace divine.
Into the sacred pile came the throng, pausing but to kneel
And breathe a *Pater Noster,* ere yielding to the mystery divine.
Sinner and saint were there with one accord. Burdens were lifted
From shoulders overborne with care. Worried lines of trouble
Vanished as by magic from faces bowed in humble adoration,
The while the organ pealed its ministry of peace.

The vision was not one to be forgotten. Through windows high
The light of heaven entered, falling as through the forest leaves
Upon the pillared aisles. Incense arose, a cloud of perfume rare,

A token of the shaft of cloud that Israel led by day.
The candles bright burned before the Virgin Queen and her Son divine,
Impaled upon the cross. Faces of saints who too had overcome,
Looked down in tender pity to hearten others on their way.
The little shrines about were frequented by those who sought
Particular blessings,—while to sympathetic ears
Souls weighted with sin poured out their tale of sorrow.

With solemn mien and reverential tone the priests the mass were saying,
Hasting as to a bridal through Latin phrase and word,
And wafer to flesh be changed to feed a hungry world.
Aloft they held it, then with holy benediction, placed it
Upon the tongue of penitence, breathing peace and pardon.
And thus, all else forgotten, the miracle is wrought,
And souls bowed low to feast on living manna,
The body that He gave to give life to the world.
Hoc est meus corpus,—and the miracle is effected. Clothed in humble form
The Eternal Presence was revealed again to hearts of faith:
Soul and body brought under saving grace, assured themselves again
Of life eternal, immortal, risen from the dead.

But while the throng had gathered, bowed and listened,
A heart burdened with grief, alone, crushed with sense of shame,
Had blindly groped her way midst falling tears into the house of prayer,
And there had cast herself at the base of marble pillar.
Alone she seemed, and friendless. Despair was in her mien,
And her posture that of hopeless grief. Too vile was she,
And heavy her burden, there to mingle with the altar-throng.
Her breast shook with the agony of grief, blinded were her eyes
To all but the bitter smart of tears; deaf were her ears to words of priest
Or music. Only she heard the anguish of her soul, and prayed,—
'Great God have mercy! Pardon my transgression! Hear thy child's cry!
O Mary, Mother of God, intercede thou for me with thy Son whose wrath

I have guilty brought upon me. Entreat Him that he spare my soul,
Nor cast me thence to bear eternal death!
Pardon! Pardon and Peace! O hear me, Holy Mary, be pitiful and save.'

And as she prayed a calmness crept about her, and a peace
Borne of heaven stole into heart and soul,—for standing by her side
In shining raiment girded, stood the REAL PRESENCE,—hands stretched forth
In peace, and pity strong and tender in His voice.
And sweeter than the peal of organ music,
Sweeter than the song of birds in spring,
Sweeter than the breath of flowers by the wayside,
Came there a voice with wondrous words of grace:—
'Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.
Thy faith hath saved thee. Go, go in peace, and lo
THE PRESENCE tarries with thee, whatever thy need may be.'"

XXI

A MOUNTAIN OF ANGUISH

Luke 22:39-46

THESE are sacred hours through which we are passing. We are in holy company, and there is danger that we fail to appreciate what is transpiring until it is too late. Our mountain excursions with the Master are among the rare privileges of earth. It is thus that we walk in heavenly places with him. To know the joy of his glory we must taste the companionship of his grief. We have climbed with him the mountain of temptation, of blessing, of hunger, of prayer and of transfiguration. Out beyond there lie the mountains of crosses, of tryst, and of ascension, after which our climbing will be alone except for the memory of other days. But one last ascent will bring us into his glorified presence where our eyes shall behold the King in his beauty. To-day we climb the mountain of anguish that we may know the fellowship of his sufferings.

There are scenes which it is a profanation to enter. There is a sacredness to sorrow that must be revered. We enter the presence of sorrow and grief with hushed voice and reverent tread. The angel of death raises a warning hand, and we approach the bedside as in the presence of awesome majesty. Anguish unites as well as divides. Sorrow makes all humanity akin, yet it creates barriers which effectually shut out the thoughtless and unsympathetic.

The mountain of anguish is the Mount of Olives. It

was a mountain of anguish for David in the crisis of Absalom's rebellion. The scene on a larger scale is re-enacted. The Master, with his disciples, has sought the seclusion of this place. On the outskirts of the garden he chooses the three kindred souls, companions with him in the joys and troubles of his ministry, and leaving the others behind penetrates to the inner recesses of the unfrequented spot. But even here grief demands a privacy to which the inner circle is not admitted. It is alone that he goes a few paces further and casts himself down for his spiritual Gethsemane. It would seem a sacrilege that we should stand and gaze upon this scene. But it is unfolded before us for our instruction. Let us mount the height with bowed spirit and reverent tread. Let us tarry with veiled eyes, but with prayerfully attentive ears. Then let us hasten from the spot, bearing with us the ineffaceable impression we have received.

1. Drinking of a Bitter Cup

There are some things too sacred to analyze. The reduction of mother love to nervous reaction is blasphemy. The attempt to analyze the agony of Gethsemane is little short of profanation. Yet much depends upon the spirit in which the analysis is made. There was a bitter cup to drink, and it was especially distasteful to him. What was it that rendered it so bitter? Was not the hemlock an equally bitter cup for Socrates? Yet he drank it without a quaver. Have not a thousand faced the unpleasant facts forced upon them by a hostile world, and met with a stoical reserve? Why, then, the anguish of the Christ? We refuse to countenance the suggestion of weakness, or of effeminacy.

Let us remember that it was not the surrender of life that was distasteful to him. He knew whence he came and whither he was going. The death pangs held no

horror for him who had steadfastly set his face toward Jerusalem. His life had been one continuous act of self-renunciation. He had exemplified his own teaching that he that would save his life must lose it. Nor was it the physical side of the torture through which the quivering flesh must yield up the ghost. He endured all of that, both in contemplation and experience, as a man of iron will whose flesh was obedient to the mastery of the spirit.

The anguish was soul agony, having its cause in spiritual realization, and confined in its sweep to the affectional life of the Son of God. It could not have been, as some have thought, that it lay in a separation from the Father, for never was he so conscious of doing the Father's will. He knew that if ever he and the Father were one it was in the sublime act of sacrifice for the world. Nor was it the proximity of sin that made the anguish keen. He had fought sin at close hand from the beginning. He has never known relief from its onslaughts. He was acquainted with it in all its loathesomeness. Its hand had threatened his babyhood. Its slimy trail was familiar in the village of Nazareth. He had seen its effects in the ills he had cured. He had seen its victories in the souls that were lost. He had known of other Magdalens than the one who later followed him. Indeed, he knew sin in its reality as none other has known it, for he understood its rebellion and destruction as none other could understand it.

Without question this agony was a mingling of heartache at the hostile response of the world he had come to redeem, and of yielding his inner, holy soul to the seemingly victorious attack of sin. How he loathed sin! He hated it with a perfect hatred. Had he not witnessed what it would do with the innocent and with the guilty? Had he not preserved that soul with virginal purity from the days of his youth? There was one

thing more precious than rubies to him, and that was a spotless character. But now, by some mysterious means, he places his own pure soul under the degrading burden of human guilt, and in his sympathy with humanity bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. He literally "descended into hell." Who can estimate the agony of a pure soul at the direct touch and smudge of sin? None of us are so spotless as to understand it. But with him the contact was unendurable. Knowing sin as he knew it, well might the only-begotten of the Father pray that this cup might pass from him.

We are very conscious that we have not plumbed this anguish to its depths. Possibly we have quite missed its real explanation. It may have been the assuming of the agony of lost souls the world over that caused him to shudder. Millions multiplied by millions with aching hearts, bruised and diseased bodies, and in the agony of the hell of rebellion, tramped over his heart. The generations that were before were followed by the generations that were to come. It behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren. He had faced temptation and had overcome. Now he voluntarily assumes the weight of sin and sorrowing of a thousand generations, and the burden is enough to crush the God-man. And your sin was there in that load he bore. My sins were numbered there too. Not one was left out. And because he carried them on his heart, right through death, and up to the very throne of God, and there procured peace and pardon, an amnesty of grace, I, too, with you, may come boldly to the throne of grace and find strength to help in time of need.

We have known what it is to assume the burden of a guilty soul that has come to us in confidence, seeking relief. We have known what it means to lose sleep and appetite as we placed our shoulders under that burden

of sin. Can this enable us to understand something of the vicarious suffering of him who assumed the guilty secrets and broken hearts and thwarted aspirations of a whole world? Surely this was the Son of God. And even he hesitated. Who can wonder at it?

2. Asleep At the Post

Oh, the infinite patience of the Saviour! Must he indeed tread the wine-press alone? The human in him called for sympathy,—the proximity of kindred spirits. The world is left far behind. The eleven have gone into retreat, but even they are not all of a mind to share this spiritual travail. The inner three are chosen, and they penetrate deeper into the tragic gloom. And then, alone he went forward and fought his fight. But the battle is fearful. The struggle is tremendous. He rests and seeks the strength of his friends only to find them asleep! A word of warning, and back to the struggle he goes. The battle rages more fiercely, and the agony becomes exceedingly intense. Again he halts and seeks the comfort of those nearest to him, but in vain. A word of tender chiding, and back to the battle he returns. And now victory has come, and in its conscious strength he returns a third time to the sleeping disciples, and says: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; it is enough."

Censure is one of the easiest weapons to hurl at human frailty. But it reacts like a boomerang. It is only God who has patience enough to cover our failings. We have thought hardly of Peter, and James, and John, because, while the spirit was willing the flesh was weak. But let us withhold our judgment. No criticism other than kindly fell from his lips who suffered most. Will we ever learn the lesson our Master has sought to teach us by precept and example? "Judge not, that ye be not

judged." "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" And we examine with care the whole course of his dealings with erring humanity, and there is ever the note of patience and understanding to be heard.

Yet, we cannot help wondering a bit at the density of these disciples. Had they been blind to the recent developments in the hostile attitude of those about him? Had they entirely missed the burden of his words? Surely, they never intended to desert their Lord at a critical hour! The significance of what was transpiring was lost upon them. They were asleep in more senses than one. At any rate, they were asleep at their post of duty. Outer guards were there to warn of approaching danger. The inner circle of body guards must be alert. But fancied security born of blindness, and the apparent remoteness of danger have betrayed them into neglect. The tragedy of Christ's aloneness hinges on it. They were unconsciously adding to the load on the overburdened soul of the Saviour.

It would be too general a statement to say that the fault of these disciples is the prevailing characteristic of the modern church. Indeed it has only been here and there through the centuries that the watchmen upon the towers have been awake. It is a comfort to bear in mind the attitude of patience in our Master, but it is inexcusable if, when we are reminded of our duty and danger, we continue to sleep. The church has spent much of her time in sleeping. A sleeping sickness has robbed us of vision and strength. Blindness hath in part befallen Israel, and the blindness is not incurable, but just the blindness of indifference and drowsiness. Occasionally a peripatetic evangelist comes to a com-

munity, and with the cry: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," awakens the churches of that community for a brief space. But the blood is sluggish. Spiritual digestion is impaired for lack of exercise. Loud complaints are heard because of unsatisfactory diet, but when duty is mentioned we have brought down to date: "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands in sleep." And a patient Christ calls to his chosen disciples as he did in years agone: "What! Can ye not watch one little hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

To change the figure for the sake of pressing home the argument, a glance at the truant prophet, asleep in the hold of the ship, is sufficient. "What doest thou here, O sleeper?" We have no disposition to call in question his historicity, but his significance for us is typical. The church, the prophet of God, dodges duty, seeks to avoid the presence of God by running away, the while a great wicked world waits for the sacrificial message and life that will reveal the atoning Christ of God. Can it be that she will come to herself only through the discipline of some Babylonian captivity? There have been times of spiritual famine and oppression, but they have been times of discovery. Weeding out and waking up have followed in quick succession. Then, and usually not until then, has the Lord seen of the travail of his soul and been satisfied. The hope of the Christ is in an awakened and quickened church, alert to the dangers that beset, and not only entering with Christ into the fellowship of his anguish for humanity, but claiming conquest for Christ throughout the manifold life of the world.

3. The Drops of Bloody Sweat!

There are different kinds of sweat. There is the sweat of honest toil that gives wholesome taste to the plain bread of the labourer. There is the sweat of disease, that bathes the fevered brow in the weakness of the midnight stillness. There is the sweat of mental anguish and terror as the mind contemplates the fearful consequences of guilt. And there is the sweat of a heart going through the agonies of hell in behalf of the object of love. We have known a bit of all kinds. The sweat of agony is the sweat that relates us to Gethsemane. The soul cannot surrender the claim for blessing and redemption. In the agony of bearing another's woe the flesh wastes away. The mind seems to reel. The heart contracts with spasmodic pains that threaten to take breath itself away.

Such was the agony of Gethsemane. The praying Master agonized in his appeal until it seemed his heart would burst and his mind would totter. The conflict was not rhetorical,—it cost blood. He sweat in his agony, and an hemorrhage accompanied the agonized pleading until there fell as it were great drops of blood to the ground. That cost life blood! Self was forgotten, and his beloved human race weighed so heavily upon his heart that he was willing to go the whole way of dying, in all its rending of the veil of the flesh, that thereby he might bridge the gulf that separated man from his rightful but forfeited inheritance. Some have known what it was thus to plead for men. Knox knew, and it became a passion with him: "Give me Scotland, or I die." Others have watched through the long night, with sobs and tears, agonizing with God for the redemption and blessing of a life beloved yet threatened by foes seen and unseen. There are those who have come preciously near to a comprehension of Gethsemane as

vitality has been gladly expended through long and dreary days that victory might dawn in a life held precious. It is this kind of costly praying that defeats sin. The praying soul is sanctified in the fellowship of Gethsemane, and the soul prayed for receives new life in ways incomprehensible. No Gethsemane prayer can be in vain. Somehow the church must go with him through the garden if she is ever to be the productive mother of redeemed souls. We know of no better recipe than to tarry long on the Mount of Olives, in the garden of Gethsemane, and assume the guilt of a lost world! Absent treatment, and temperate self-control may be overdone. It is the church of the bleeding heart that will have power with God and with men.

Nor does the Master lose in the examination we are giving. The sensitive shrinking of a soul refined is not unmanly. The fact that once praying did not solve the problem of even the Son of God but binds him closer to our humanity the while it binds us closer to the great bleeding heart of God. There would have been something uncanny had the conquest been won by the wave of the hand. Victories are not so achieved. A company of mountain climbers are scaling precipitous heights. They are bound together with strong rope to the guide. One slips and falls, and while the footing of the rest is sufficient to resist a calamity, each is pulled back a bit by the fall of the one. And humanity has done a deal of slipping. There have been headlong plunges into sin. There have been bad cases of back-sliding. But we are all bound together. And we are all bound to him, except as we cut ourselves from him. And in the up pull he has lifted us, and in the down pull he has suffered. None of us lives to himself. None are independent of him. And he is not indifferent to us. He suffered being

tempted, and even his pure soul feels every pull down as we slip back. But bless God, he does not let us go. When will we fathom the mercy that endureth forever?

4. When Surrender Spells Victory

The two terms do not seem to be akin. The surrender of one side means victory for the other. But not so in the contests of the soul. Surrender is always the secret of success. The victorious life is the submissive life. God's will is going to be done in the long run. It will prevail. The life that harmonizes with it is the victorious life, and no legerdemain can make it otherwise.

It is interesting to observe that it was not always easy for Jesus to will the will of God. He always willed it, but it was not always easy. His meat had been to do the will of Him that sent him, and to accomplish His work. The heart of his prayer life, as of that of his disciples, was "Thy will be done." He recognized that God's will was not a thing to be endured when there was no way out, but it was a thing to be DONE. And now as that will in all its implications dawns upon his soul in the agonies of the garden, the natural cry is that the cup may pass. It is too bitter, too awful, too horrible! But when at last from the depths of his soul, and with the full strength of his will, he cries "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done," we read that angels came and ministered to him.

Into the woods my Master went,
  Clean for-spent, for-spent;
Into the woods my Master came,
  For-spent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to him,
The little grey leaves were kind to him,
The thorne-tree had a mind to him,
  When into the woods he came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And he was well content;
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo him last,
From under the trees they drew him last,
'Twas on a tree they slew him last,
When out of the woods he came.

—*Lanier.*

It is a great thing to have faith in God. There is no salvation without it. And faith implies faith that His will is so preferable that, whatever the cost may be to us, we will it above any choice of our own. It likewise implies that God's will is all comprehensive. It embodies everybody and everything. From the tiniest electron to the largest planet, and from the most insignificant act of life to the destinies of nations, His will is comprehensive. And so wise is it that any human interference is at best but presumption. It is a will that cannot be changed, though it may often be thwarted. It is a will in whose trail flow blessings innumerable for all creation. A perfected world is its goal. Every wheel doing its work and fitting with the nicety of precision into every part of the scheme of things. This is God's will. Human blessedness, enfranchisement of soul, fullness and abundance of life, strength and divineness of character, and joy unspeakable and full of glory for a redeemed race. Every natural desire met in the finest way. Full expression made possible for the redeemed life. Oh, it is a great vision and a great program! And the qualification of sonship is the eternal willing of that will, whatever its personal and temporary cost may be.

The incarnation implied the truth of the divine sonship of Jesus. But never was Jesus so fully and truly the Son of God as when, facing death, and putting his

great heart under the load of all the bleeding, broken, bruised hearts of the world in the Father's name, said: "Not my will, but thine be done." And if any of us would know of a certainty our adoption and regeneration, here is the test,—willing the Father's will.

XXII

A MOUNTAIN OF CROSSES

Luke 23:32-46

THE excursion before us this morning is one which will sift us a bit. Hitherto the excursions have been such that we have taken them more or less as a matter of course,—a part of the program of life. But the ascent of the mountain of crosses bids fair to prove discriminative. In the first place, it is but a hill on the outskirts of town rather than a high and imposing altitude. And then, why climb it at all? What was the necessity of the first climbing? And why need we climb it since it has once been climbed? And as we approach this mountain we still observe that the crowds who followed for the loaves and fishes, turn back and walk no more with him. They want the prize, but the price is too high.

But a few observations are in order. The hill is harder to climb than much higher heights. It takes courage and muscle to climb it. It is a daring climb, but the most needful of all climbs if we would continue life's journey with him who climbed it alone so long ago. If we part from him here, we part from him forever! It was needful for him to climb it back there. God did not make it necessary, but we made it necessary. God had to do one of two things. He had to abandon the redemption of mankind, or else Christ had to climb that mountain of crosses. It was a predicament for God. He chose the lesser evil. Nor is the ascent a success until we have followed in his train.

Sacrifice is the law of life. A bloodless religion is a lifeless religion. Perfectly natural and normal developments of life must be checked and excised that the life may flow more rich and full in more important directions. The stream must be dammed if the sluice is to liberate a stream with power to grind the grist and produce light. The branches must be purged, pruned, if they are to produce more fruit. There is a limit to human vitality. Scatteration spells disaster. Concentration spells success. The less essential must be sacrificed with the unnecessary naturals if some great service is to be rendered, or a great soul achieved.

Theories and doctrines of atonement have too frequently obliterated the fact of atonement. Granted the fact, the theory is of little moment. Dismiss the fact and the theory is but mockery. It is the experimental fact of at-one-ness with God that counts. All else is uncertainty. We have erred in trying to reduce the atonement to a head philosophy instead of a heart renewal. We cannot improve upon God's method of dealing with sin. Our methods would leave the sin untouched, or leave the sinner unsaved. God, Who knew how to combine the elements of air and water in healthful proportions, knew how to meet the need of man. Calvary, with its three crosses, is the answer. Let us dispense with interpretations and absorb the historical fact with its experimental implications.

Our participation in the climbing of Calvary is no less important that was the Master's. Paul could say: "I make up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ in my body." He probed to the depths and discovered that without crucifixion with Christ there was no resurrection with Christ. We must climb the mountain of crosses. Missionary success has always traced back to the ascent of Calvary. The church that has thus lifted

up the crucified Christ has had unique drawing power. But this will become more evident as we consider a few of the deductions from contemplating the scene before us.

1. The Three Crosses

The three crosses standing out there against the sky, and seen for a long distance, have stood out equally clear through the centuries. From that hill on whose high elevation the tragedy of Calvary took place has come one of the greatest lessons humanity can learn. The details of the crucifixion are too well known to justify any detailed account of the awful tragedy. It avails little to picture the gruesome event which can but shock our finest sensibilities. Sufficient is it if we recall the significance of that tragedy, how that through it all there was revealed a love and forgiveness in the heart of God toward all erring humanity. The greatest blessing that has come to the race is the knowledge that God has not cast us off.

Some one has said, and we wish to borrow his thought, that everyone is crucified on one of the three crosses that marked Golgotha's hill. It is not a question as to whether one will be crucified. The only question is as to the cross upon which that crucifixion will take place. We have them presented before us,—the cross of selfishness, the cross of self-surrender, and the cross of self-sacrifice. We have the choice as to which of these it shall be. The outcome should determine our choosing.

First, the Cross of Selfishness.

St. Luke reads: "And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying: If thou be Christ save thyself and us." The prevailing passion of this man's life was prominent and predominant in his death.

It was selfishness that lay back of his life of crime, and selfishness that prompted his irreverent railing. It was but natural that he should desire to live. But the spirit exhibited by him was thoroughly unrepentant. His life was blood-stained. Theft was but a commonplace to him. And here he hangs between heaven and earth. Earth has abandoned him, and he has abandoned heaven. Death stares him in the face, but he refuses to hearken to the voice of God. Conscience, long since dead, has refused to speak. There is no spark of hope or life left to him. The outlook before him is as black as the blackest night,—as black as sin can make it. His body is here crucified upon a cross of wood, and by Roman command. But his real crucifixion took place many years before. His soul was crucified upon a cross of selfishness, and the power by which he was crucified was his own selfish desire.

The crosses of selfishness can be discerned on every street, in almost every home, in the market places, in shops and factories, and even in the church. There are multitudes whose whole thought is for their own pleasure and comfort. They may not stoop to the depths of crime, but it matters little to them how the rest of the world fares. Human life is but a prey. Stupidity but affords the opportunity of self-improvement. Dives went to torment not because he was rich, but because he was selfish. Self is but one of the forms the tempter assumes. Nothing is sacred before it. Life, honour and happiness are sacrificed upon its altar. The foolish person whose goal is the attainment of selfish ends fails to perceive that he is crucifying himself upon the cross upon which the unrepentant thief was immolated.

Second, the Cross of Self-Surrender.

How different from the first thief is he who died repentant! Both were equally guilty, and both suffered

the penalty of their sin. But whereas the first had crucified himself long since on the cross of selfishness, the other's soul was still alive. We hear him expostulating with the unrepentant sinner. He acknowledges his sins before God and men. His spiritual vision is still keen enough to recognize the sinlessness of their divine companion. And in response to his cry: "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," came the assurance "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It does not require that we should here try to unravel the mystery of the promise. What if Christ did say, immediately after his resurrection: "I have not yet ascended to your God and my God!" There is no unavoidable inconsistency here. According to Peter, Christ preached to the spirits in prison, the while his body lay in the sepulchre. It was there he could minister more fully to the dying thief.

The cross of the repentant thief is the cross of self-surrender. The scene to which it looked was one of peace and fellowship with Christ. Wherever there are sinful hearts that desire to be free from their sins, the eternal message is that surrender to Christ is the gateway to the life and joy of heaven. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But surrender to him is the secret of the operation of this law. The surrender of General Lee at Appomattox Court House is illustrative here. As long as there was rebellion there was no mercy. But when rebellion gave way to surrender, the magnanimity of General Grant was seen in the courtesy,—"Keep your horses, General. You will need them for your fields." Paul could well boast that he was the *doulos* of Jesus Christ, for by surrender and capitulation he found the freedom with which Christ emancipates. Mary Magdalen, out of whom the Lord

cast seven devils, was crucified on the cross of self-surrender.

Third, the Cross of Self-Sacrifice.

This cross stands highest. It is that on which the Prince of Glory died. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name." The guiltless gave himself for the guilty, the Son of God died for sinful men. And what though the anguish was great? What though he died misunderstood and humiliated? It was for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross and despised the shame. And because he thus revealed the Father's love and will "he has now sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, being so much better than the angels as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

The Cross of Calvary is the throne of the crowned Christ. And if we will share his throne we must, with Paul, be crucified with Christ. Each of us is being crucified upon one of these crosses. The first looks out into a night of hopeless gloom. The second looks beyond the grave into the paradise of God. But the third looks up to the very throne of the sovereign Saviour, which throne we may share with him,—if we are willing to pay the price. It is simply a matter of choosing your cross. You cannot escape. Let the end determine the choice.

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

Oh dearly, dearly has he loved,
And we must love him, too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do.

The mountain of crosses comes to its fullest significance in the cross of self-sacrifice. A new force is felt among the sons of men. History but waits to verify the teaching that "he that loseth his life shall surely find it." Men had talked oft of God. But hitherto no mind had grasped the lengths to which His grace would go. A dying God is theoretically impossible, but gloriously and experimentally real. A God dying for man is naturally inconceivable. It took a revelation to impart the conception to the sluggish mind. But here we see the mystery profound. All rules of logic and expectation are transcended. Calvary defies explanation. It contains the grace of God, infinite and incarnate, as from the wounded body flows the elixir of eternal life.

Man can only stand in awe in the presence of this scene. With every faculty in abeyance the fact of Calvary is left to make its indelible impress, and the soul is left to absorb its revelation. The miracle of grace conforms to no laws the mind can master, but its operation is contingent alone upon the receptivity of faith. Christianity must ever center in an unfathomable mystery.

2. Some Tests of Discipleship

We have said advisedly that if we part company with Christ at the approach to the mountain of crosses, the parting is forever. He himself has given us the test of discipleship. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Nor is the cross here spoken of synonymous with some petty irritations and inconveniences in life. The cross stands for nothing less than crucifixion. Self must not only be denied, but it must be crucified. The following must go even to the summit of the mountain of crosses.

The denial of self is not only difficult. It approaches the impossible. It rends the self. It implies another self,—a higher self,—in whose interest the lower self is put aside. We can deny our enemies, but it is hard to deny our friends. Hardest of all is to say "No" to the insistent demands of our own natures. To say "No" to a bodily appetite calls for self-mastery. To say "No" to a mental bias becomes increasingly difficult. But to deny the cravings, the demands, the insistent pleadings of self,—spiritualized self,—is indeed a task calling for strength divine. God does not put all people through the test. The test is there, but many fail to qualify. They don't pass. What the state of their souls is we can only surmise. But when God wants to make a saint he first of all calls for this self-denial, and the crucifixion of those things which stand in the way of full surrender. The crucifying process is not pleasant. None craves for its excitement. But it is necessary, since the experience is universal, much of the difficulty vanishes. It is but a matter of choosing the cross of self-sacrifice in preference to any other. This it is to be "crucified with Christ." "No cross, no crown," is the motto of the redeemed life.

A moment's pause may not be amiss, as we inquire "What sacrifice am I making to prove my allegiance to Christ?" Men enter the arena of the world prepared to pay the supreme price for wealth and position. The altars of the god of this world are crowded with sacrifice. Health is squandered without a qualm. Food is left untasted in the eagerness to close an important deal. Day and night are devoted to the interests of trade. The sacrifices on the altar of society range from virtue to life itself. The Lord requires no greater, and no other sacrifices than are being laid upon the altars of paganism. And yet we applaud the self-denial and self-restraint of him who sacrifices for fame or wealth, but we pity him who makes no greater sacrifice in the interests of an eternal and moral principle. Surely, our eyes are darkened that we cannot see aright!

We sacrifice the lives of a hundred thousand lads to defend a nation's honour, and we say the price is cheap. When will we place an equal value on the cause of the kingdom of heaven? There seems to be a glory in dying for a flag. Where the graves of soldiers lie thickest the souls of patriots bow as before a holy shrine. Is not a cross as worth-while as a flag? Is it less heroic to live for a cross than to die for a flag? Is it less of a serviceable sacrifice when it is a living sacrifice? To die is soon over, but to live through the years, with the iron entering into the soul, foregoing the things for which body and soul and spirit make insistent demand, yet foregoing because the highest spiritual interests of all and the glory of Christ require it,—is this less than heroic? Is this less than martyrdom? Not in any correct interpretation of life.

The school of Christ is not unclassified. It is carefully graded. The great teacher has his disciples assigned according to their advancement. There are some

who have never graduated from the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. They hover eternally near the kindergarten. Others have attained higher grades. Some are in this school and have been for many years, but they have not yet learned to add and subtract, much less to multiply and divide according to the mathematics of this teacher. Some are in the school, but they show a strange aversion to the geography of the kingdom. They don't like the mountains, and they refuse to look to the far-flung horizon. It is a strange world, and the Lord's patience verily endureth forever.

But there are some who have learned how to read the divine plan, to write the new gospel, to add and multiply according to the mathematics of stewardship, and whose geography takes in the heathen countries and the islands of the sea. They have climbed the mountains, and have learned the hidden mysteries of God. They are going on unto spiritual maturity. And these are they who, like their Master, have found some great cause worth living for, and worth dying for. They are the great souls, the godlike of earth. They are the Moses and Abrahams and Elijahs and Elishas of the Bible. They are the Johns and Pauls and Luthers and Wesleys of Christianity. And in lesser ways, but in equal degrees, there are hosts of heroes, saints and martyrs in varying stages of growth, whose lives reflect the Christ life and the Christ spirit. They, too, are mountains in evolution.

3. The Magnetism of Calvary

The cross is not incidental nor accidental in Christianity. It is essential and fundamental. The cross was in the heart of God before ever it found its way to Golgotha's crest. And the cross is the magnet of the ages. All attempts at dispensing with it must fail. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto

me." To which John adds the comment: "And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God." The greatest magnet the world has seen is not of steel nor is it a lodestone. It is a plain, ugly, rugged cross, wrapped round and round with the love of a dying God. No soul fully exposed to this cross can persistently resist the drawing power of the crucified Christ.

But the centuries would seem to belie our claim. Nineteen centuries have passed into oblivion, and all men have not been drawn to him. Was he at fault in his pronouncement? Or can it be that John misunderstood it? In any event, the magnetism of Calvary has not worked. And we must discover the cause in the fact that the crucifixion has been halted by a church refusing to be the reincarnation of the spirit of the crucified Christ. As that body was crucified, so must this body pass through a like experience. Not until organized Christianity can truthfully confess "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" will she have power with God and with men in drawing the world to Christ. Our evangelistic power has waned. Our vision has become clouded. Our purpose no longer holds with an eye single to the glory of God. We have allowed our religious impulses to play second fiddle to the world, the flesh and the devil. And the result is a sceptical but lost world, and a satisfied but impotent Christianity.

This must not be taken in the sense of faultfinding. It is but a presentation of facts as differentiated from possibilities. Such faults as there have been are traceable to the unconscious errors and humanly unavoidable imperfections of those on whose shoulders the burdens of leadership have fallen. A more devoted band is not to be discovered than the Christian church. Its ideals are the highest, its lives the most ideal, its undertakings

the most courageous, and its successes the most pronounced of all that are known to human activity. But the glimpse at possibilities we have reveals the amount of growth not yet realized, and of service not yet done. Moody began to live a great life when he determined to live the sacrificial life. "I am determined to show the world what God can do with a thoroughly consecrated man." Imagination can only revel in the thought of what would be the outcome, did the whole church in a single generation conform to that standard. But happily, God knows humanity too well to expect it.

It is possible, too, that the church has confused the objective of the drawing. It has been variously misinterpreted as a drawing toward a formulated set of doctrines, or to a specified organization of individuals centering in a theological concept. But it is far different from that. Unless men are drawn to Christ the magnet fails. If men feel the drawing of the personal Christ, whatever their interpretation in terms of theology and theory, it is successful. And the real Christ, faithfully revealed, and actually presented, will prove an irresistible magnet to the souls of men, regardless of climate, colour or creed. He, in his crucifixion, embodies the ideals of the race.

The fabled vision of Constantine, whereby he saw the cross in the sky with the words inscribed on the clouds *In hoc signo vinces,* has a lesson the church cannot afford to ignore. We have tried to conquer in the sign of the dollar and the pound. Academic degrees have had their value, but have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. All substitutes have proved inadequate to the task. Christianity stands or falls by the sign of the cross. Too long has one branch of the church been allowed to monopolize a symbol that belongs to all. If all Christendom glories in the cross, let

us acknowledge it and bear it as a standard before the eyes of men.

This cross about which we gather is not merely an ornament to be worn as a pendant. It is an instrument of torture and death. It is a red cross,—blood-red,—red with blood. But it has come to have a new meaning. At one time it symbolized death, but to-day it stands for life. It represented despair, but it stands for hope. It stood for defeat, but it is the emblem of conquest.

4. Five Echoes From the Mountain of Crosses

From the height of Calvary have come five words, echoing and re-echoing through the centuries. But a moment can we take to hearken. Yet they are pregnant words, containing in concentration the essence of the gospel ministry.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Here, in its supreme test the pardoning love of a gracious God stands revealed. Hitherto the words of pardon had been uttered whenever contrite and penitent sinners came seeking His blessing. But here no blessing is sought by the sinner. No acknowledgment of sin is made. With heavy sledge the nail is driven through quivering flesh, but in spite of the torture the ministry of pardon and intercession continues. A Christ who can pray such a prayer, and pardon such a deed, can be trusted in every confession and plea.

"This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." At once the worry is lifted, and in the last hour of life the dying thief knows that he still has a chance. A proper name for our God is "the God of another chance." The well-intentioned severity, with which exponents of the divine justice have visited human frailty, is here given a setback. We have previously tried to push

aside the veil that separates this life from the intermediate state, but our discoveries have not been extensive. But without discrediting the importance of a life of preparation for the unfolding future, let us see here the grace of a God whose property is always to have mercy. As long as there is a hope God holds on.

"Woman behold thy son. Son, behold thy mother!" A social gospel and ministry is here given *multum in parvo*. There is no individualism here. There is a relationship closer than the ties of blood, into which those born of the Spirit of God truly enter. "Who is my mother, my sister, and my brother? Whosoever doeth the will of my Father!" And it is this tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. Better the occasional overemphasis upon the relations of Christians in brotherly love than the cold and distant cynicism that reflects the mind of the master of lies and doubts. It can scarcely be said to be overdone on any extensive scale. And with the echo comes a new note,—the note of chivalry. Reverence for womanhood, the spirit of defense and courtesy, the care of those least prepared to defend themselves in the unequal battle of life. Even on the cross Jesus was a gentleman. Would to God that his spirit might descend more fully upon a greedy and sensual world!

"Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?" The reality of the sacrifice can not be doubted. How otherwise could he to whom the presence of the Father was as real as existence, and in the performance of the divine will, think of his experience in this light? Granted that God had not forsaken him, could anything less than the agonies of hell have made him feel that he had? All rhetoric and drama have been expunged from the story. There was a life tragedy there coming to expression.

Let us leave the interpretation of the words to the theologians, but the reality of the cost of our salvation can no longer be left open to doubt.

"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." He showed us how to live. He shows us how to die. Death is but commending the spirit in its outward flight to the keeping of the ever-present One,—the unavoidable God. The physical dissolution is but the cessation of pain. The spirit is free for closest touch with the divine. Death has no sting to the Son of God. Neither has it to the trustful soul.

And these echoes, as they ring in our hearkening souls, will bring the significance of the mountain of crosses so near and make it so real that life will never be just what it was before. It will be easier to appropriate the gospel hope in the hour of failure and gloom.

Back from the mountain of crosses we depart with the sorrowing friends. There will come a brighter day, but just now the night is gathering. In humbleness of spirit let us on our way.

"The day was drawing to its close. On yonder hill,
Grim and barren, stood the crosses three,—
The highest in the midst. And o'er the sky
Crept silently the gathering shades of night.
Down from the cross the precious weight was lifted
By hands of love, the while the blood was washed away,
And then in haste yet still with love they bore him
To Joseph's new-made tomb to wait the Easter morn.

The deed of love accomplished, with heavy heart
And dimming eye they went their several ways,
To think,—to rest,—to weep,—to wait,—to pray!
The brutal sons of Mars kept martial watch
O'er the field of coward carnage,—hell's defeat.
And here and there hushed voices spoke
As in a present mystery profound and deep.

Out o'er the roads and by-paths crept a band
Of patient watchers, who had waited at the cross
Until the help of man was past recall.
Then with sad tread had started homeward,—
Mary, mother of the Christ, and new found mere
Of John, leaning upon his arm, and resting
On the strength of her who had been Magdalen.
No tears upon that face, so white and drawn with pain;
No sighs from lips which sorrow's touch had sealed.
The virgin slowly, sadly turned her heart-sick footsteps
Unto the home of John, henceforth to be her own.

The Sabbath's advent brought with it no gladness;
The agony of heart no toil might dissipate.
Weary must be the waiting till, the period ended,
Toil-hungry hands might find their rest in work.
How dreary dragged the hours, till night was lost in daylight,
And daylight lost again in night ere yet
The new day came, and with it tearless grief,—
A fountain that nor voice nor hand might stanch!
When lo! upon the morning air is heard a step,
A voice, a cry! What mean these joyous shoutings?
Are people mad! What is it that they say?
'The Lord is risen! Empty is the sepulchre! Our
Eyes have seen his resting place, now emptied quite,
And our ears have heard angelic notes proclaiming,
'Why seek the living midst the dead? He is not here.
The Saviour lives indeed.'"

XXIII

A MOUNTAIN OF TRYST

Matthew 28:16-20

TO some people a mountain top is the summit of expectation, the height of ambition. To others it is but a beginning. As a goal it is an inspiration and a challenge, but as a starting point its importance is unsurpassed. It all depends upon the point of view. Better far to aspire to the highest peak than to rest content down with the valley folk. Better still is it to aspire to the celestial altitudes and be at home with the glory folk. One is good, the other is better. The best is none too good for the children of the King.

To Matthew the mountain summit was a goal. To Luke it was but a beginning. Matthew's gospel closes with the mountain of tryst. Luke's gospel is but the recognized prelude to the real ministry of Christ, continued through the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men after the mountain of ascension has been left behind. Matthew closes with a commission given. Luke's gospel has no end, but it continues with the commission undertaken and in process of fulfillment. There are grades of apostleship and degrees of inspiration. Let us not stop short of the highest altitudes and the rarest atmosphere. To-morrow we will climb with Luke. To-day let us ascend the mountain of tryst with Matthew, and with the other disciples who there met Jesus by appointment.

The mountain of tryst was one of the hills of Galilee. It was probably the mountain hitherto called the moun-

tain of prayer. Its selection was prophetic. Not in Jerusalem, the seat of the martyrdom of God's faithful servants, but in Galilee of the gentiles was the meeting to take place. The center of gravity is shifting. No longer the city of David, but the crowded ways of all life is to be the geographical heart of the kingdom. In rejecting him, Jerusalem had been rejected. Her house was indeed left unto her desolate. The chosen people are no longer those of Abrahamic blood, but those of Abrahamic faith. The ministry to the gentiles, later carried out by Peter and Paul, was here given divine sanction. Away from the old and musty forms of a decadent religion! The resurrection was a new beginning. Let its program begin where prejudice is least, and where neglected hearts are hungry! It is an ideal spot for the imparting of a world commission. Indeed, through all his previous ministry the soul of Jesus had felt a drawing toward these Galileans with their less stifling religious and social atmosphere. One race could not monopolize him. He belonged to humanity.

And hither, to the mountain of tryst, flock the scattered disciples. They come by appointment. Judas only is lacking, and he is no more. Peter is there, for the appointment stated: "Go tell my disciples AND PETER, that they go before me into Galilee. There shall they see me." All of the others who had forsaken him and fled at the first sign of danger were there. And in imagination we, too, are there, for the appointment had to do not only with them but through them with us. There was a commission there given from which the church of Christ will have no release until all nations have been evangelized. With eager, yet reverent tread, we hasten to the mountain of tryst. It is a spot of holy ground. Tryst implies love, and love makes holy. Especially when it is holy love.

There is an inward look as well as an outward look from this point of vision. It is a place for heart searching. It is a place for coming into personal touch with Christ. It is a place from which to look to the uttermost ends of the earth. It is a place to learn the practice of the eternal presence. And as we thus turn our eyes inward upon our own souls, then outward toward the eleven, then upward toward the ONE, then off to the far horizon that encircles the mountain,—any mountain of tryst,—we begin to understand a little better our task and our limitations and our possibilities. And first we note

1. The Blindness of Doubt

Doubt is not so much the inability to see as it is the unwillingness to see. An honest heart will not long tarry in unbelief. Unbelief is mental, moral and spiritual suicide. The so-called doubter has something to conceal. Were he truly honest, he would follow the Spirit of Truth Who ultimately leads into all truth.

We do not know who the doubters were in that little group. There were others aside from Thomas. It is said of that meeting that "when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted." Doubt is peculiar. It is stubborn, and indicates less an attitude of mind than an attitude of will. The apostle has spoken of the "evil heart of unbelief." Mark's postlude contains an expression indicative of the condemnation of unbelief. The skeptical attitude is inimical to soul growth. Full, joyous, confident faith is the atmosphere in which the flower of the soul comes to full bloom. The doubters disbelieved in spite of their senses. Jesus was there, visible to the eye. Yet they doubted. They doubted him. They doubted their own senses. There can be no more painful hell than that of unbelief. Let us hope

that at length their hearts yielded to the mastery of the risen Christ.

It is in line with the strictest psychology that salvation should be through the exercise of faith. This is different from gullibility and credulity. Faith implies the exercise of the reasoning faculty. Faith is based on credibility inspired by the object. It grows on experience. Once tried and proven a more daring venture is made. It is the law of all success. The objects of faith vary, but the exercise of faith is one. And the voice of the deepest instinct and heart need must be heard if faith is to become vital and strong.

Infidelity is not confined to those who express their doubts. The genuine agnostic may indeed be a man of large faith. It but requires that he be attentive to the voice of the Spirit of Truth. If he is willing to die for truth as it has come to him, he is not far from the kingdom. The dangerous unbeliever is not the person of the Ingersoll type, but rather is it he whose profession lines him up with the disciples of Jesus, but who in actual living stumbles at the exceeding great and precious promises of God through unbelief. Our churches have a generous sprinkling of these practical infidels. Indifference and unconcern, lukewarmness and worldliness are their earmarks. Jesus might stand in their midst, and they would not recognize him. The most convincing appeal to their sense and senses might be given, yet they would stand immobile. They are a grief to their Lord and a handicap to any aggressive and comprehensive Christian program.

Considerable has been said in previous chapters as to the possibility of seeing the invisible. The subject of prophetic vision has come in for its share of attention. We have indicated that others might have stood with Moses in the mountain of fire, with Isaiah in the court

of the temple, with the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan, or with John on the Isle of Patmos, to whom the visions imparted to these men of God would have been impossible. There are two things that blind the eyes, and the two have a common origin. One is doubt. The other is sin. And doubt is sin. An impure thought bedims the sight, it creates doubt, and doubt lies back of impurity. Sin is transgression, but transgression is possible only when the soul holds the law in contempt. It would be impossible for a soul to be saved in doubt. It must be saved from doubt. Doubt will create hell. Doubt is condemnation. The pure in heart will see God. Purity and faith go hand in hand. "If any man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak from myself." And the tragedy of sin is the blindness of doubt it produces, and the glory of God, with its soul-satisfying warmth and blessing, is eclipsed. Persistent unbelief is the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Many will fail to appropriate heaven for the simple reason that through unbelief they will not recognize it when they see it. The capacity for enjoying eternal life is absent. Without eyes they cannot see. And the soul has no other compensating sense to the spiritually blind.

2. Locating the Center of Gravity

We looked within to see if in any of us there might chance to be an evil heart of unbelief. But introspection has its embarrassments and dangers. We must look up to him who said: "All authority is given unto me, in heaven and on earth." The center of gravity is not at the poles, nor in the sun, nor in some spot on the earth. Power is centralized in a person, and that person is Christ.

We appreciate power. It challenges something within

us to come to flower and fullness of expression. Life is power. Power is life. We are not ashamed of power, but of weakness. We desire increased power. We pray for power, forgetful that all the power we will ever have will be determined by the extent to which we are possessed of Christ. As well might a disconnected wire cry for power to run a car. "Without me ye can do nothing." "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth." From this time forth the limitations of a self-assumed humanity are transcended, and the power that created and controls the universe centers in him. Sufficient power to overcome sin and sickness, and even death, lies in him. There is no power in the Almighty which is denied him. It is thus that he gives the blanket promise of the power of prayer in his name. And we have unlimited power at our disposal when we will but learn how to employ it.

Personalized power spells authority. But the authority is not arbitrary. The power is not despotic. There is a harmony that pervades all creation whereby, when conditions are favourable, all things work together for good. Each has its place. The welfare of each is the concern and goal of all. Nothing of the idea of benevolent autocracy must be cherished. The power is a cohesive power. "By him all things hold together." Here is the law of attraction centered in the Christ. And his sovereignty is the furthest removed from selfish despotism. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." There is but one rightful order in all social life, even as there exists but one rightful power in the physical realm. The redemption of humanity centers in obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ.

The missionary and evangelistic activities of the church are looking toward one goal—the reduction of

loss and friction, and the increase of life in the world. The recognition of the authority of Jesus is indispensable. The highest authority is granted him in heaven. Angels wait to do his bidding. The stars in their courses move in obedience to his will. The creation of the universe had its origin in him. The same hand that fashioned suns, and created life, and directs planets on their way is the hand that would rule the hearts of men and the destinies of nations. And when that sovereignty has been effected, nation will not rise up against nation, nor brother against brother, but in love and concord humanity will evolve as sons of God. There has been a usurpation of authority by powers hostile to the welfare of humanity. Racial and individual antagonisms have been fostered. The rights of others have been forgotten in the greed for gain. Selfishness has blinded eyes, and the defiling harpy of sin has befouled the most sacred occasions and relations of life. There is no true peace, nor normal and spiritual maturity other than in obedience to this authority centered in the regnant Christ.

We need to tarry in the contemplation of this theme. Power is not in prayer, but is in Christ. Authority is not in the church, but is in Christ. The court of final appeal is Christ. The power of the gospel is Christ. We have looked too long at creeds and forms, at programs and fields. The eyes have to be redirected to him. Red tape is cut, and we go over the heads of all self-appointed intermediaries and go direct to him. The veil of the temple has been rent in twain, and the holy of holies is accessible to all. This does not belittle but it subordinates the church. This does not deny but it reinterprets orthodoxy. This does not lessen but it increases the sense of importance of a world vision and a world mission, because there is sufficient power to carry

through, and the note of authority sounds in the challenging voice. We fail only when we look away from him. Anything that needs doing can be done. It calls for but one thing—obedience to that voice of authority issuing from the centralized power of the personal Christ.

3. A Three-fold Commission

And because of this authority the commission comes imperatively—"Go ye therefore, and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." There is no getting around it. Our likes and dislikes are not consulted. Our commander has spoken. Commands have come to us which we have felt free to disregard. We do so only at our peril. To refuse is rebellion. To hesitate is to commit treason. The word is "Forward," and forward we must go.

It is indeed a pioneer challenge. The frontiers must be pushed ever farther away. No longer must we be content with dress parade. Marching orders have come. Forward, march! "Go into all the world." No spot henceforth is to be known as holy ground, for all ground must become holy. Not one people but all people are chosen. Narrow-gauge religion has little in common with Christ. Narrowness of sympathy is out of harmony with his plan. The world is the field. Disciples are to be won everywhere. God loves the Hottentot and the Lett as truly as the Jew or the Greek. The Great Shepherd would gather into one fold all his flock. And to disciple means more than to enroll, and to baptize. It means to render all the nationalities of the world genuine students at the Teacher's feet, learning of him how to live in relation to their own lives, in relation to

their fellows, and in relation to God. Talk about universities! Here was the only true university ever planned and put into operation. Its curriculum embodies the wisdom of the ages. Its course extends through time. Its graduation comes only in the transition to higher honours and greater responsibilities at the hands of Him who says: "I will make you ruler over many things."

But these diverse peoples are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Could the commander have meant the puny and farcical performance that has so often passed under that name? We doubt it. The water baptism might do as a beginning, but could not serve as a goal in his eyes who came to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Many are still in the anomalous position of the Ephesian converts of whom Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. Disciples through water baptism, yes! But baptized with fire? Baptized with the Holy Spirit? The idea is foreign if not quite unfamiliar to them. Yet, there is no genuine Christian baptism, administered through whatever denomination, unless the life is bathed with fire and inspired with the Spirit of God.

The missionary appeal has been sounded until our ears are a bit heavy. We are wearied with appeals that tax our pockets without satisfying our minds. Possibly we have been slow to see the world need. Probably we have been too concerned with the duties at hand to pay much heed to those at a distance. Unwise pleaders have berated us for our coldness and lack of devotion. A world, steeped in heathenism, darkness and sin, for multiplied centuries, has been laid at the door of a handful of earnest folk, already bearing a heavier burden than their fellows. There is no question as to what

might be done were all Christians to awake to the full significance of this commission. The world could be brought to the Christ in a short period of time. But, it is unwise to be impatient. God has not been impatient. The slowness of response is not the fault, but is the misfortune of the church. It is a condition that takes time—far more time than the efforts of a generation and the piecemeal information, more or less doctored to suit the case, that is handed down at second hand. Such programs as the Centenary, and the New Era movements, are invaluable. The church is born again every time the far view is caught. The pushing back of the horizon is always salutary. As a whole the church is not hurting itself in its eagerness to bring in the kingdom. But, she is doing something worth while, and will do more worthwhile things if our leaders use patience, justice, judgment and common sense. Let not the command of the Christ be lost in the confusion of scolding voices of overwrought leaders who know their task is too big, but whose hearts have not kept in tenderest sympathy with the heart of the patient, dying, and sovereign Christ.

Having said this much, we can afford to add our voices to those who have mounted the summits of tryst, have heard the divine appeal, and have caught the vision of a dying world. The far view is quite commensurate with our nearness to him whose challenge and command we are hearing. That church or individual is not truly Christian which has not caught the missionary passion of Christ. Nineteen centuries have fled and the commission has only been partially obeyed. Where heroic lives of service have been planted the desert has been made to blossom as the rose. Nations are bearing the impress of individual lives which heard the command and were obedient to the heavenly vision. No such labour

is in vain in the Lord. The trouble with us is that our interests are too restricted. We have scarcely qualified as world citizens. We are not more impassioned because our sight is hemmed in. We tarry among the foothills where we are shut in within ourselves, and the stupendous opportunities of world conquest are ignored as we attend to the trivialities of a small environment. We need to climb the mountain. We need to train the eyes to seeing at a distance. We need to remember that it is only thus we see ourselves and our petty interests in right proportions, and catch the visions that challenge to heroism and consecration. We then become mountain souls in our own right.

Nothing less than the whole world for Christ! An individual surrender is not despised, but the Prince of Peace is entitled to world rule. He should have it because of what his rule will mean to men. He is entitled to it because of what he is and has done. Not until "the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" will the lot of man be happy. America for Christ is high patriotism. But the world for Christ is highest humanitarianism, and sublimest loyalty. The serious acceptance of the commission ushers in a new day for him who hears.

4. The Eternal Presence

We have looked within. We have looked up. We have looked out over the world. What next? A promise, conditioned on obedience. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We have interpreted this often without the condition attached. We have learnedly transposed it as "the consummation of the age"—all of which may mean anything or nothing. We have projected it forward to the end of time. Is there any rule of exegesis to hinder our further inter-

pretation—"even to the ends of the earth?" America's Christ, and Africa's Christ. China's Christ, and Germany's Christ. The Christ of the bushman, and the Christ of the Eskimo! Even to the ends of the earth!

He is the eternal Christ, but he is more. He is the inescapable Christ! "The light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world!" Wherever the Christian worker goes in obedience to the commission, the Christ has preceded him. There has been some degree of preparation. He is felt even where his name is unknown. Tennyson wrote:

> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day, and cease to be.
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

The tragedy of life is to meet him and not know him. The greatest tragedy is to think to know him and yet ultimately learn of our mistake because we have failed to fulfill the conditions of his presence. Far better to prove an affinity for his spirit, hearing his voice and responding, even though his name be unknown, than to speak his name, and think to monopolize his favour, while ignoring the very conditions upon which fellowship with him is based.

The whereabouts of the Christ has been a fruitful topic of debate. Upon his ascension, what happened to his body? Where is he now? When he comes again, from what quarter and direction will he come? How will he come? And thus may the issue of his eternal presence be clouded by unprofitable discussion. It is worth while to hear his own testimony. Whatever more may be implied in the second advent, it is well to turn from the arguments of men to the word of the Christ. And in the midst of all the confusion and strife of

tongues incident to the questions of pre-millennial and post-millennial controversy, it is quieting and comforting to hear him say: "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." "We will love him and make our abode with him." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"—as if to say: "I never went away!"

We well understand that such a treatment plays havoc with stereotyped and ossified theology. The recognition of the spirit always disarranges the definitions of the letter. But there are two advantages to be derived therefrom. It allows for the exercise of calm judgment, and it provides for all, rather than only some, of the declarations of the word. It imposes no limitations on possible developments, but it refrains from the erection of walls of separation which in any event must be torn down when the great day comes. There are a few of these problems which must remain unsolved for the present. Joyful confidence and loving obedience will leave them in the hands of him who made the promise and who is able to fulfill it more wonderfully than we can conceive. Let us not miss the joy of present fellowship through anticipation of another coming, but let us await the increasingly abundant manifestations of his presence until some day it will be here in all possible fullness, in God's good time and way.

XXIV

A MOUNTAIN OF ASCENSION

Acts 1:1-14

TO-DAY, for the last time, we climb a mountain with the Master. We shall climb other mountains, but not with him. Our last mountain will bring us to him. He will be waiting at the summit to receive us.

The mountain of ascension might easily be confused with the mountain of tryst, did we not note carefully the context. It would seem that Matthew regarded the story as completed when the commission to evangelize the world was given. But Luke has gone deeper and has more information to impart. We have seen that the mountain of tryst was in Galilee. The mountain of ascension is Mount Olivet—a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. Here again they have met by appointment—not only the eleven, but others who had gathered with them. We are given to understand that above five hundred were witnesses to the fact of the ascension. The little group was increasing in a marvellous way. This same mountain has been the scene of other events. It was the mountain of conspiracy, and it was likewise the mountain of anguish. And now it serves as the scene for a fitting close to a most remarkable epiphany.

We enter into the discussion of a theme that is open to varied interpretation. We must beware lest differences and difficulties in interpretation becloud for us the fact to be studied. Whatever objections one may interpose, it is well to remember that Luke was of a scientific

turn of mind, and one not easily misled in the acceptance of reports. It is to him that we owe the entire story of the ascension, which serves to introduce, as it were, the second part of the gospel of Christ. The question suggests itself—nor need we hesitate to acknowledge it—was the vision of a Christ received up into the clouds and taken from their sight, an actual occurrence? Or was it a prophetic vision, in which the spiritual reality outshone the physical fact? Let us remember that both before and after the resurrection, but especially afterward, Jesus seems not to have been subject to the operation of ordinary laws. The whole record is of a piece with his resurrection. A being who could rise from the dead, could enter closed rooms without opening the door, and could ascend into the sky even as Luke reports. The burden of disproof is on us. It is true that we are apparently beset with difficulties from the standpoint of the material localizing of heaven. But even here our information is meager, and our knowledge of what lies out beyond leaves much to be desired. To dismiss the subject because of its mystery and difficulty is neither sane nor fair. At the least the theme may be set aside for further light. At the best we can interpret its spiritual significance.

It were well for us to give a little attention to the instructions he left with his disciples before leaving them. There had been a very significant promise of enduement with power on one of those last occasions of meeting, and now before his ascension he amplifies it. They were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit in the near future, after which they would have the promised power, and would be telling witnesses for him throughout the known world. To make certain of this they were to tarry at Jerusalem until the promise is fulfilled. Their task was to witness for him, as to who he was, and what

they had seen him do. This would take strength and power, but God would supply that through the bestowment of his Spirit. But haste was inimical to this bestowment. They must tarry. Pentecost was the answer to their obedience, and Pentecost was the birthday of the Holy Spirit in the world. It was a new incarnation, the spirit of the Holy God clothing himself not in one but in the flesh of many. That incarnation continues.

There are questions which we cannot answer. The fact of his ascent and the promise of his continued presence are in need of clearer correlation. Our finite judgment often sees an hiatus where in reality there is none. We wait to discover this among other matters of desired information, and have faith that some day we will smile at the difficulties we thought we saw.

1. When Gravitation Had to Let Go

We err when we infer that in any of the unique events that marked the life of the Master the laws of nature were suspended. Law is as sacred as God Himself, of whom laws are but the executive manifestation. Laws may operate singly or in concert. Counteraction will produce results otherwise impossible; but no law is suspended. In the matter of the ascension, just as in the walking upon the water, gravitation was not suspended, but other forces were at work which counteracted it in such a way that it appeared not to operate.

To deny such a combination of forces in the production of certain results is to go counter to the experience of mankind. The propulsion of the bicycle, the flight of the aeroplane, the development of any of the varieties of fruit or flower, are all the result of combined forces, the combination being the result of intelligent choice on the part of man. Otherwise there would be no progress, and no mastery over the forces of nature. To admit the

possibility of such things to man, but to deny them to Christ, is to strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.

How then are we to interpret the ascension? The attraction of the earth would have held him fast to its surface by the laws of gravitation. But there was an attractive power stronger than gravitation, which drew him away. Gravitation still operated, but in his case it had to let go. We wonder what resistance kept this power from overcoming the attraction of earth long ere this. Undoubtedly it was the self-imposed restraint of the Master himself who voluntarily exiled himself from the surrounding of glory until he should accomplish the work the Father had given him to do. There was a strong pulling both ways. The earth pull was the attraction of need. The heaven pull was the attraction of homesickness. His will swung the balance. Until his work was done he willed to stay, and the angels in glory could not entice him away. But that work accomplished, and there was not enough power under heaven to hold him back. He gravitated toward the glory land as the needle seeks the pole.

We wonder a bit about the location of that glory land. Has it a location? Or is it a state of spirit independent of time and place? Is it up or down? Tradition has pointed upward, unmindful of the fact that in a few hours' time the same attempt to locate heaven would be to indicate the opposite direction. We have pointed downward, toward the center of the earth, to locate hell. But our physical geography is subject to revision. Hell is a spiritual state, oftener within the soul than without. Is it otherwise with heaven? Why, then, was Jesus carried upward? How far did they see him ascend before the cloud received him out of their sight? A great change in popular interpretation has taken place. Our skies are not the same as the skies of the ancients. The

Copernican theory has played havoc with certain forms of orthodoxy. The matter of the ascent and of the return of Christ are both affected by it. Shall we dispense with theory based upon scientific knowledge to support a literal interpretation which can do little good? Shall we stubbornly close our eyes to facts and thus insult the Spirit of Truth? Rather let us look for a spiritual interpretation that will conserve the value and dispense with the imperfect form in which the value is transmitted to us. We do not know how near to earthly scenes may be the realm of spirit. We do not know how extensive the realm of the prince of the powers of the air. But we do know that, his work accomplished, earth could not hold the Christ back from the most real of all existence, and the most glorious of all glories. Wherever God was, in holy being and power, there Christ would be. Further than this imagination must answer the questions arising, and with that we enter the field of uncertainties. We would not be wise beyond what is written. We would only be consistent. And we would admit with reservations the possibility of an intermingling of material forms and spiritual existences which we cannot now appreciate.

2. Back Home in Glory

We will be pardoned, therefore, if we continue to express spiritual truth in material garb. We have no other form with which to clothe our conceptions. However much the reality may have exceeded our ability to depict, or our grasp of imagination, there are certain things we may affirm in all safety. Jesus was back home in glory with the Father.

Jesus was out of place in the world. He was too pure for it. His ideals were too high and holy. His entire

spirit exhaled the atmosphere of heaven. Men felt that he was different. The human animal knows of but one thing to do with things that are different. He kills or casts it out. The different thing is an embarrassment. The different person, especially if he is a better person, produces uneasiness. This cannot be tolerated. So they put Jesus to death. But no one could properly appreciate Jesus in the earth setting. It takes heaven, and angels, and golden streets and pearly gates to provide a fit setting for him. And the grace of it all was that regardless of the fact that he didn't fit either the ideas or customs of this sin-cursed old world, and every contact with sin was painful to him, yet he stuck it out, and hoped and sought to stir to life the dying spark of heavenly flame that smouldered in the human heart. He came to coax men up out of contentment with mire and sin, and to win them back to the appreciation of eternal values.

How homesick he often must have been! His frequent retreats with the Father were needful to hold him down to the hard and debased level of human life. The earth-air was stifling. He had to get away for fresh breaths from heaven. Every imagination of man's heart was only evil, and he needed refreshment in the presence of the holy God. He was the effulgence of God's glory, but that effulgence was cramped in until at the transfiguration it had to burst through. He sighed for the glory he had with the Father before the world was. And when the last hour drew near he could say to his disciples: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I." Yes, indeed. He was homesick all of the period of his exile among us. And when he ascended he just went home. And we can almost hear the shout of the angels as they welcomed back the heir of heaven

to the throne which only love for poor, fallen humanity could have persuaded him to leave.

We have often wished that a glimpse of the Christ in his glory might be vouchsafed to us. We have a glimpse or two at second hand. These must suffice us for the present. But some day we shall not only see him as he is, but we shall be like him. We shall share his glory. The thought is exhaustless. We would do well to let it grow upon us.

The glorified Christ appeared to Stephen. It was an hour to test the stoutest heart. Unjustly accused and condemned to death, he has fallen to the ground under the shower of great crushing stones. Life is being crushed out of him. But intense as the agony is, and dear as life must be, he beholds Christ at the right hand of God! The sight of the glorified Saviour takes from him all anger and resentment. Men watching him behold his face, as it had been the face of an angel. He steadfastly gazes, and a bit of the divine glory is reflected, and a prayer like that which ascended from the cross arose—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And then he fell asleep, like a happy, but tired child in the arms of love.

The glorified Christ appeared twice to Paul. We do not know much about either experience, except from what we gather in contemplating the results. First we must see Paul, intense, zealous, convinced that he is doing God's service, but bent on an errand of destruction. Those accursed Christians must be rooted out. Nothing short of death will do. Empowered for his important mission he hails men and women to prison, and even gives his vote for their destruction. And something happens. Call it what you will. Paul said that he saw Jesus. And the vision had the effect of transforming an entire life. And the glory that shone

from his holy presence outshone the glory of the sun. Years later, though how and where we do not know,—Paul himself was unable to tell whether it was an experience in or out of the body,—he saw him again. Paul confessed that the revelation surpassed human expression. He seems to have been carried to the third heaven, and there penetrated into the heart of the mystery and beheld the exceeding greatness of the glory divine. And there was just one thing to keep Paul humble thereafter. A thorn in the flesh became a positive necessity. And when Paul understood it, he gladly endured the thorn, for the vision was worth it.

Then John saw the glorified Christ. In the midst of his symbolized Church stood the Christ, dressed in the garb of heaven. His hair had turned white in the agony of Calvary, but his eyes flashed with a fire of life and victory. His very body radiated light, and his voice was as resonant and voluminous as the sound of many waters. The life of the churches was protected in his right hand. From his mouth came the two-edged sword of the Spirit, God's eternal truth. And his countenance was more glorious than the brightness of the Syrian sun. And John, who had known him in days gone by, and who had beheld him transfigured on the holy mount, had never seen anything so glorious as this. He fell at his feet as dead.

But these reports will never completely satisfy us. Our eyes cannot look upon that transcendent glory now. But we shall see him, the King in his beauty. Then we will wonder more than ever at the love that would for even thirty-three years forego this glory to minister to the dull, stupid, sin-stained, and unwilling sons of earth. It isn't as though it were a man ministering to men. He emptied himself, and became of no reputation, and became in fashion as a man, and humbled himself to the

death of the cross. No, we shall never fully understand, any more than we understand the patient and forbearing nature of love. If we cannot understand the lesser, how will we understand the greater?

3. A Ministry of Intercession

And now that he is back home, what is he doing? It would be impossible for Jesus to be idle. There is his Father's business that must ever engage him. No less now than formerly is it his meat to do his Father's will and accomplish His work. These many centuries he has been back there in glory, and yet they do not measure time as do we up there. What has engaged his divine energies? Just what engaged them here. His ministry was an intercession while on earth. No less is it so in heaven. On earth he interceded with men to win them back to God. In heaven our prayers are filtered through his holy brotherhood, and he serves still as the link that unites a hungry-hearted God with a sin-beguiled race.

Prayer is the atmosphere of heaven. How we choke as we try to breathe it! We stumble and flounder and feel that we have quite failed, unless indeed we have a nice stereotyped prayer that will fit every occasion. But those are prayers offered to be heard of men. The person who prays them looks for no other reward than the praise of men. But when we really try to breathe that bracing atmosphere, a little goes a long way. But, blessed be God, "He ever liveth to make intercession for those who come unto God by him." However blunderingly put our prayer may be, he understands it, and he clothes it in the language of heaven, and he offers it to the Father as our prayer, with his own O. K. attached, and the Father answers according to Jesus' improvements, and we would never recognize our faulty, stumbling, blundering prayers in the beautiful petitions

he presents to God. Yet, in accepting him we accept that ministry of intercession and the Master still ministers to the needs of his own.

There is another aspect of his interceding ministry which may well engage our thought for a brief moment. Not only do our prayers pass through him, but our poor, frail, sinful lives approach the Father in him. The King holds high court, and a pauper comes seeking a request. The pauper has been a rebel, and has alienated himself from the realm. But in contrition he returns. He would approach the king, but his clothes are soiled and tattered. Shame hides his face. Confusion is writ large. Then, the King's own son, the prince royal, steps down, and throwing over the rags and filth his own royal robes, lifts the pauper to his feet and presents him to the King as his friend. And the pauper is accepted in the beloved. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins, and also for the sins of the whole world." Nor is the Father hard to appease. Indeed, it is the Father's own gracious nature that expresses itself in the Son and makes it possible for Him to be just and the justifier of the sinner. What a God! What a Christ! "O, how you'll love him when you know him!"

And, incidentally, we who have climbed this mountain of ascension, may well record that the spirit of intercession is always the Christ spirit. And the ministry of intercession is the highest ministry on earth or in heaven. It is a ministry into which we are called, to participate with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit in bridging the gulf, and bringing man into oneness with God. Possibly this ministry will be less in word of mouth, except as the word is the spontaneous expression of a bearing of life. God needs none

to entreat Him to be merciful and save the world. All such prayer is little short of insult to God. But God does need multiplied millions to yield themselves so that the permeating Spirit of love of God will be brought into touch with men whenever these intercessors mingle with men. Away with formulated prayers as intercessions! We do not need to intercede with God. God would have us intercede for Him with a world that is estranged from Him.

4. Behold the Bridegroom Cometh!

We can well understand how those simple Galileans would stand gaping up into heaven, whither their Master had disappeared. But they are recalled to their senses, for two men, clothed in white, stood by them and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And from that hour the note of expectancy resounds in every sermon and epistle.

The fact of the return of the Christ should need no argument. Remove all reference to this expected return, and the Bible is emasculated. It matters little that the apostle miscalculated as to the time of his coming. The fact remains, supported by the testimony of Jesus himself, and firmly believed in by Paul, and Peter, and John, that the second coming is as essential to the complete gospel as was the original advent. An expectant church will be an alive church, and a working church. We seem now to have fallen under the condemnation of those servants who said: "Our Lord delayeth his coming," and who began to beat up the other servants and generally develop an indifferent disposition. It is a sad comment on modern Christianity, that the one who be-

lieves in the fulfillment of the promise is regarded as a bit eccentric.

The time of the return of the Lord is known only to the counsels of heaven. What part we may have in hastening the day, or in delaying it, none can rightfully declare. The attempts to set the time and season of his coming are nothing short of presumption. Repeated attempts have met nothing but disappointment, and history can only repeat itself. There is a raw flavour of quackery in all such prognostications. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own authority." Wisdom and prudence will shun these false prophets as blind leaders of the blind.

The manner of the Saviour's return is even more difficult to affirm. It is safe to say that the subject has been so left in doubt, and beclouded with uncertainty, that any attempt to be dogmatic is necessarily fallacious. To confine the return to a spiritual presence is to leave much of the problem untouched. To insist on a literal and physical return from the sky in the sight of all men presupposes a flat earth of narrow dimensions, populated by a few thousand at most. To say that every advance, every improvement, every reform established is the second coming of Christ is only part of the truth. Why not leave the manner and the nature of the return to God? Our interpretations cannot determine it. We are more likely to be mistaken than not. There is no sin in leaving the question open. Our most strenuous efforts cannot affect the nature, nor determine the manner. Why not wait until sufficient light has come to throw all phases of it into clear relief? Then the kingdom will not be divided into hostile camps, Lilliputian-wise anathematising each other over the prefixes pre-

and post- as attached to the millennial hope. Surely the heart of the Christ must suffer in contemplation of the cruelties of orthodoxy.

Suffice it to say that all expectations of the first coming of the Christ were subject to revision. Prophecies abounded that looked forward to the incarnation, and yet none was prepared to receive him when he came. His return will be no less upsetting to many preconceptions. But it will be more complete, more satisfying, and more wonderful than the heart of man can grasp. Let us patiently wait, and gladly herald each sign that signifies the nearer approach of our ascended Lord.

The Coming One

Christ comes, the matchless Paraclete,
  Our Comforter, our Advocate,
And still abides, divine, complete;
  We meet and worship at his feet,
  And love supplants the reign of hate.

Christ comes in every life's release
  From error, sin, and tyranny.
The advent of the Prince of Peace,
  Eternal, brings mankind surcease
  From all that hinders liberty.

Christ comes in every breath of prayer,
  When ever song of praise is given;
He comes upon the vernal air,
  He comes whenever good men dare,
  He comes in every breath from heaven.

Christ comes when wearied eyelids close
  And breath in gasps comes short and faint;
He comes in every blossomed rose;
  He comes in infant's sweet repose;
  He lives anew in every saint.

Christ comes again, to rule the earth
With love and life victorious.
He comes, a new world has its birth,
And all is saved in which is worth;
The heavens burst all glorious.

Until he come, my heart shall wait
In fervent prayer, in grateful song.
And though his coming may be late,
And weakened faith may hesitate,
I know full well, 'twill not be long.

XXV

A MOUNTAIN OF SLAUGHTER

Revelation 16:1-16

MORE mystery surrounds the mountain of slaughter than is found in the neighbourhood of any of the other scriptural heights. To begin with, many who speak confidently of this altitude are utterly unaware that it is a mountain. Scholars are not altogether agreed as to the interpretation of the text that deals with it. Its location is uncertain, whether in the mythological past, or in the final consummation. And its entire setting is so clothed with cloud and mistiness that not only is the mountain difficult to discern, but little can be observed from its heights. Nevertheless, the mountain has scriptural setting. We dare not refuse the attempt to climb it. However little is fully accomplished, we shall be better satisfied that we have seen what we could. We speak of Armageddon, which, being translated from the Hebrew, means simply "Mount of Slaughter."

In every great conflict,—especially such as has widespread bearing upon the race,—some enthusiasts are sure to see the battle of Armageddon. It is an expression that has been seriously and grievously overworked. It ill behooves us to attempt to define that whose definition by others is herewith rejected. Yet, the rightful contemplation of facts compels us to the conclusion that these conflicts are all a part of the battle of Armageddon, and are but temporal expressions in physical violence of an eternal, spiritual conflict. From the beginning of time right and wrong have been in violent op-

position. From the beginning of time the conquest of right and the overthrow of wrong has been assured. If the figurative speech of the Apocalypse can be taken literally, the mountain of slaughter can be geographically located. Otherwise it, too, must remain in the realm of spiritual fact, though independent of material form and place. The conquest of right and the overthrow of wrong, with all the agencies involved, is here typified by the battle of Armageddon.

We cannot but feel that a mistake is committed whenever the attempt is made to pin down the events recorded in Revelation to specific times and occasions. There have always been those whose zeal was not according to knowledge, who have seen the fulfillment of this book in the most trivial events when judged by the later light of reason. An event, such as the recent world war, assumes gigantic proportions to those living at the time, but it is open to doubt whether later centuries will see it in the same light. Thus the interpretation of the book of Revelation has suffered much in the house of its friends. Probably every occurrence of far-reaching influence in two thousand years has been identified with some "prophecy" of this book. The obvious impossibility of even most of these interpretations should prepare our minds for a different type of explanation, and should render us a bit obdurate when the next convincing advocate of special revelation comes along.

With comparative safety the battle of Armageddon may be declared to be the crisis of the Apocalypse. The whole scene centers in the mountain of slaughter. This is the peak of all the landscape. To this all that precedes leads up. From this the rest follows out. In this is concentrated the final conflict, whether the word "final" be interpreted in terms of time, or of importance. Hence, a brief resume of the book of Revela-

tion may be helpful in interpreting the significance of the mountain of slaughter.

To the church at large the Apocalypse is less of a revelation than it is a mystery. This is due to the fact that we persist in reading prose into poetry, and history into prophecy. A prophecy may be entirely accurate, and yet have little historical reality. If it presents a spiritual ideal that is never fully realized, still it has justified itself in the simple fact of the vision. Prophecy has less to do with earthly events than with spiritual truths. We err when we endeavour to bind the two too closely together. The Apocalypse is a spiritual prophecy, declaring the history of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, with more or less association with the world of actual events. What men call history obtains its importance only from the spiritual interpretation and interests involved. Viewed from this standpoint, the book of Revelation will not be quite so embarrassing.

This book was the product of a peculiar mind at a peculiar time. The mind loved to think in figures. The time was one in which the powers of hell were combined for the strangling of the infant church in its crib. The church was passing through deep waters. Conflicts without and within bade fair to discourage the faithful, and the cause seemed destined to defeat. Encouragement was necessary from the Divine Spirit. But that encouragement to the faithful must be so veiled as not to excite greater antagonism from the existing powers, and thus add to the sufferings that were already unendurable. Hence the mystic language of the book. Without doubt the figures of speech represented to the early readers definite powers and personages with which they were familiar. But they erred insofar as they confined the application to them. These personages and powers were but temporary expressions of spiritual forces,

destined to break out into other expression as the centuries passed. Without doubt the early church gave the book a decided historic setting. Were that interpretation final the book would have little significance for us. The passing of the centuries has made necessary an interpretation that looks for fulfillment beyond the field of the senses and the realm of known history, and sees it in the growing triumph of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom.

We tarry for a moment among the foothills that surround the mountain of slaughter. At first we are near the shore and we hear the sound of the dashing waves, —the voice of many waters. And there we see the glorified Christ about to impart his completest message to his church. This message has a seven-fold preface as he dictates a word to each of the representative churches of the day. The Apocalypse itself in reality opens with the heavenly scene in chapter four, where the celestial assize is pictured, and the destinies of the world are unfolded through the lion who was also a lamb. With the loosing of the four horsemen in chapter six the warfare is begun which comes to its climax in the mountain of slaughter. God's providential care puts the seal of protection upon the faithful. Then the armies of heaven are mustered, and the armies of hell are drawn in battle array. The person of the commander of the opposing force is variously described. He is the dragon, Apollyon, the old serpent, the devil. There is no doubt in the mind of the apocalyptist as to his reality. Midst the shouts and songs of victory from angel voices the commander of the hosts of heaven crowds the battle to an issue. The strategy of warfare is resorted to on either side. Now it is Michael leading the hosts of the skies, and now it is the Faithful and True, riding upon a white horse who leads his armies to

ultimate victory. The conflict takes an historical turn as now in the person of some man unknown to us the enemy is incarnated. Is it the Emperor of Rome? Probably it is more accurate to say that said emperor was but the temporary expression of satanic hostility. Other incarnations would not be hard to find. But, from the beginning the victory of right over wrong is assured, and by means of plagues and vials of wrath the warfare progresses until the enemy is overthrown, captured and cast into the bottomless pit where he is chained for an indeterminate time. The issue comes to a climax in the scene of our text. Inasmuch as there is still another mountain to climb, in whose ascent we shall behold the unfolding panorama of the rest of this unique book, we will here desist from further interpretation of the Apocalypse until we make the next ascent.

1. Getting the Right Angle of Vision

There are three factors in any authentic vision. There is the thing to be seen, the person to see it, and the proper angle from which to make observation. The latter implies the ability to see. Before us, from the mountain of slaughter, lies a vast plain. It is a battle-field on which momentous issues are being settled. Back of historic events there are spiritual powers. These powers are in mortal combat. The rule of the world is at stake. Now under one form, and now under another, the battle rages. New battalions are marshalled. New combatants participate in the struggle, but the battle is one. Its historic settings are but the smallest part of the combat. Now it is Syria as marshalled against Israel, now it is Rome in array against the church, now it is the Roman hierarchy in mortal combat with freedom, and now it is the central powers arrayed against the rest of the world. But, whatever companies and battalions are fighting, and

however their uniforms and equipment may vary, the commanders are the same, the issue is one. And the ultimate outcome is sure.

Our position is a bit anomalous. We have climbed to the summits, and are viewing the battle. In general our place is on the battle-field. There have always been too many spectators, and too few fighters. That is the reason the battle has been drawn out so long. But it is well that we get an outside view of the fight. From our point of vantage we can see the triumph from afar, and by faith do something to bring it nigh. We will go back to the fight with clearer vision. The sweat will be out of our eyes. The din and smoke of battle had blinded us, and we became a little disheartened for fear we were on the losing side. But now that we know how the battle goes, and now that we see the infinite resources of King Immanuel, and understand how limited, though still how powerful the enemy is, and now that we have rested a bit from the heat and toil, our fighting will naturally be more spirited and courageous, more hopeful and well directed.

But let us make sure that we are looking at things from the right angle. We err if we think it is all done but the shouting. We likewise grievously sin if we think that there is nothing left for us to do. Our faith borders close on unbelief if we reconcile ourselves to a pessimistic view of the strife, and lay down our arms as though further fighting were of no avail, and as though only the return of Christ can set things right. The Christ is here, marshalling his forces. To-day his presence is felt throughout the army of truth. To-morrow he shall appear in the habiliments of royalty and victory. We do him little honour when we doubt his own word of continued presence. His face may be hidden from us for a season, but his presence cannot be

disguised. He is in the midst of his soldiers, with encouragement and wisdom, and with resources inexhaustible. To-morrow he will be heralded as King of kings and Lord of lords throughout the earth.

While standing here the conviction grows upon us that we have been in this place before. The mountain of slaughter is the mountain of defense. The real combatants are spiritual. On the one hand are the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly realm. On the other are the battalions of heaven with horses and chariots of fire. Elisha and John, though separated by centuries, were looking upon the same scene. The twelve legions of angels, whom the Master had at his command, were but a division of the armies of God. There are times when to mortal vision the battle is against us. But

> "Right is right, since God is God,
> And right the day must win.
> To doubt would be disloyalty,
> To falter would be sin."

It is in the hour of seeming victory that Satan's overthrow has always been most overwhelming. He delivered his master stroke at Calvary, but it reacted as a boomerang, and it was his most decisive defeat. Lowell wrote:

> "Truth forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne;
> But that scaffold sways the future,
> And behind the dim unknown
> Standeth God within the shadow,
> Keeping watch above his own."

And history but proves it to be true.

2. A Revised Estimate of the Slaughter

It is nothing less than shocking to note how men have interpreted this slaughter. The impotent rage many have experienced has coloured the whole scene with the blood of men. Blood has been shed in the conflict, but the wounds were the wounds of sin. The loving Christ, and the compassionate God, have been misrepresented as intoxicated with a blood-lust against their enemies. The only ameliorating phase of the misrepresentation is the inconsistency and ignorance of its advocates. The abandonment of mercy in the imposing of punitive justice has little to identify it with the program of Christ. Surely, there are those in the ranks of faith whose inner souls have not yet known the actual Christ!

We will get at the heart of the truth quickest if we read the slaughter as the destruction of opposition to the rightful rule of God. That the God to whom vengeance belongeth will trample his erring creatures in holy wrath, is an idea born of heathenism. Unfortunately the bodies of rebellious men suffer as do their souls. They hurl themselves against the Gibraltar of eternal truth and right, and are broken. But only a devil would do what some misled but ardent advocates of Christianity have laid at the door of Jehovah. It is the unclean spirits,—the spirits of demons,—who are gathered to the mountain of slaughter. And the vesture dipped in blood, as the Victor appeared on the white horse, was stained with the blood of Calvary, rather than with that of unfortunate humans destroyed in the fierceness of anger. We protest against the whole barbarous delineation of the slaughter as a travesty on the character of God. If one argue that the Apocalypse itself substantiates this view, we must reply that this is an element of pre-Christian Judaism which has tinctured the picture, and for a moment the heart of Christ has been for-

gotten. That the book has many Jewish features is a commonplace to every student. It is a vindictive spirit thus revealed, rather than that of one who in death agonies cried: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Nor is this universalism. There is a stretch of theological highway where we may even walk with the advocates of that creed. That punishment is remedial rather than vindictive, is indeed a Christian interpretation. Modern penology owes much to this practical application of the teachings of Christ. It would seem to us to resolve itself rather into an interpretation of immortality. Where the Universalist, together with the old-time orthodox believers, infer an immortality that is inescapable, we read an immortality that is conditional. Under certain circumstances, such as the unbroken contact with Christ as the source of life, the soul may live forever. The wages of sin is death. And by death we do not mean a conscious condition of remorse. God only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable. It was Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The death that ensues,—whatever its interpretation may involve,—is not imposed by the wrath of God, but comes through the natural outworking of the laws of sin. The whole gospel in its inception and culmination is a protest against the method of procedure that involves spiritual death. Least of all would God inflict eternal death upon humanity. The wrath of God is directed toward those spiritual powers in the heavenly realm who misguide and deceive men to their destruction. Everlasting life is a gift to those whom God has given to Jesus Christ. It is the knowledge of God through His Son.

There is no pretense of thoroughgoing consistency in this presentation. The theme is too vast for a finite mind

to grasp in its entirety. Various aspects of the truth will burst upon the seeking soul, and our limitations may prevent our tracing them back to a common source. A truth whose entire sphere was comprehensible would be too small to engage a soul for long. It may be that destinies are decided in that border land between time and eternity whither the soul has been ushered at death, but whence it is not yet prepared to present itself spotless before the throne. We do not know. We but protest that God's mercy endureth forever, and that there is little place in the program of the God and Father of Christ for modes of procedure that would shock the pious mind if postulated of a heathen deity.

3. The Casualty List to Date

There are three elements that loom large in the predetermination of the conflict. They are, first, the forces now on the field; second, the list of casualties; and, third, the reserves. A glance at each of these in passing is reassuring.

Of the first it is well to note that the forces now on the field are by no means confined to numerical Christianity. Beyond the walls of the organized Church are a million souls in every age, whose sympathies and activities are with the right. They belong to the other sheep who are not of this fold. Whatever their reasons for not enlisting in the regular army of God, the secret is between them and God. It is more than possible that they have looked for a something that they could not find, as they examined our profession and practice. But at the counter, and in the voting booth, in the stock exchange, and beside the workman's bench, by the operating table, and at the desk in school, office and den, there are still the seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who, in their inner

hearts know themselves to be at one with the cause of truth and right. Nor is the Captain unmindful of the loyalty of these soldiers.

Again, there are the multiplied millions of all denominational complexions, enrolled by squads, companies, battalions, and divisions. Their warfare may not always be most efficient, but they present a mighty fighting machine. Nor let us treat lightly any group, however different their uniform and methods of warfare, who serve the same Lord with us. Bigotry has created more havoc and distrust than all the differences of theology and practice.

But beyond these forces there are the countless hosts of heaven. Elisha saw the mountain filled with them. The spirits are enrolled. Angels make wonderful fighters. The spirits of battlers in other ages are there. Our sainted dead are by no means inactive. There is no furlough in this warfare until Jesus is enthroned.

And the forces of nature are enlisted. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The laws governing the retreat of waters co-operated with the departing Israelites in facilitating their departure from Egypt. "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."

To take up the third of these factors,—the question of Reserves,—we may take account of the following: We have the unborn generations which will be educated by more efficient and informed instruction, whose physical development will make for better soldiers through the application of Christian ideals to the matter of health and hygiene, and whose minds will be more at tune to truth through the scientific discoveries and disclosures as to the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The further discoveries of science will join the reserves for battle. Every invention will be subject to impressment

into the Master's service. New discoveries of healing properties, new appliances for correcting ills, new inventions for increasing happiness,—all, when brought into service, will join the host of reserves. Knowledge is the handmaiden of piety, and the kingdom has no need to fear its growth. Moreover, the nations turning to Christianity are offering an opportunity for the enlistment of reserves that will ultimately mean a wholesale defection from the other side.

To resume the second of these factors, no small indication of the direction of the tide of battle is found in the casualty list. The dead and wounded give a mighty, though a silent testimony. One by one the nations and individuals who have sought the overthrow of truth and virtue, of right and justice, have gone down to ignominious defeat. The list is a bit imposing. Egypt is gone. Ur of the Chaldees is no more. Babylonia and Assyria are but names to vex the student of history. Greece and Rome are but memories. Spain is on the decline. Russia has been brought to bottom levels that in rebirth she may rise again. Nor is the argument one of death from old age. China disproves the necessity of a nation surrendering its immortality.

One by one the causes of evil have perished. Slavery, serfdom, ignorance, license, drunkenness have either passed or are passing. Tyranny is among the last to go. Enough evil persists to engage the armies of the Lord for an age to come, but he does not properly read nor understand history who does not discern the hopeful signs of the times. Take evil at its worst, and it has never been less evil. But a comparison of the yesterdays with the to-days will reveal the effect of a virile faith in cleansing many of the augean stables of human habitation. Some evils have fallen, never to lift the head again, while others, sorely wounded, continue a

stubborn fight. And the names of Pharaoh, and Belshazzar, and Nero, and Caligula (is the latter the one whose number is six hundred, sixty and six?) have gone down in hatred and shame, while the names of Moses, and Daniel, and Paul, and Peter, are names men will ever hold in reverence and honour. The name of Luther will live long after the name of the pope who excommunicated him will have been forgotten. The name of Wesley will be cherished, even when men will forget that there ever was an archbishop who refused to sanction his irregularity. And the battle goes on!

"He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat!
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat!
Be swift, my soul, to answer him; be jubilant my feet,
Our God is marching on!"

4. The Spoils of Victory

The contest from the beginning has been for the control of the world. This has implied both the material and spiritual elements combined therein. The wealth of mineral, and of forest, and of the land,—the mastery of river, and sea,—the possession of spots of beauty and points of vantage,—these, as well as the souls of men, have been the things contended for. With the souls of men has gone the mastery of their thinking, the advantage of personal influence, the loves and hates, the wills and desires inherent in the soul. The ability to reproduce the likeness of God's handiwork by brush or by chisel, the power to reproduce the melodies of the spheres, and the knowledge that discovers the truths fundamental to life and being, for the sake of controlling the forces of nature, making them servants to human pleasures,—these are involved in the spoils of war. To the victor belongs the spoils.

These things are in themselves good, for they are divine gifts. But the history of the race is tragic with their misappropriation. A hostile hand has sought the mastery for ulterior ends, and the contest has been severe. He has hoodwinked many pious folk into a surrender of them to him as his by divine (?) right. Little by little the contested territory is being won back to the Christ. Every ton of coal in the earth, every ounce of gold and silver, every precious stone belongs to Him. Every tree and every flower, every brook and every mountain, every beast and every soul, every faculty and every affection are His possessions. For these is the conflict. There will be no rest until the "kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." It is war to the finish. It is fighting to the hilt. No compromise!

> "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,
> Doth his successive journeys run.
> His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
> Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

We err when we postpone the triumph of the kingdom to another sphere. From the time that the note was sounded,—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"—another note, too, was sounded which had to do with that kingdom. Its message was: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done ON EARTH as it is in heaven." Too many have thought of the conquest in the light of certain forms of insurance,—the "die-to-win" kind. But that is not the hope set before us. This world belongs to the spoils of victory. The high offices of state and nation, the control of wealth and industry, the shipping and manufacturing of the necessities and luxuries of life, and the establishment of right human relations is a part of the program. Whatever more the

eternal God has laid up in glory for those who love Him, remains to be revealed. But the Christian program has no less a goal than the conquest of this world, with all its manifold material and spiritual implications, for the Christ.

We descend from the mountain of slaughter with a new hope and a new purpose. We have confidence in our leader. We believe in his program. We dedicate ourselves to its achievement. In the name of the eternal Christ, "Come on, let's go."

XXVI

A MOUNTAIN OF PROMISE

Revelation 21:9-22:21

WITH our excursion into the mountain of promise we complete the Mountain Scenes from the Bible. In more than one sense this is our last mountain of ascent. It is the last mentioned in our spiritual Baedeker, and it is now prophetically what it will eventually prove actually to be, the mountain whose climbing will know no descent, but will bring us to the gates of the holy city.

Our journeyings have been frequent and by devious ways. We have not attempted to climb all of the scriptural heights, but our undertaking has been quite comprehensive, and we have left few of the important mountains unscaled. We have found that some of these mountains were material heights, while others were imaginary, though none the less real. We have seen that each altitude had a wide sweep of vision, and possessed an atmosphere rare and bracing. We could not ignore any of them without serious loss. The end of these imaginary excursions finds us a bit sad that the climbings are over. Did we say that they are past? Nay, but begun. For from the height of the mountain of promise we shall step into the higher levels of a life that mounts higher and higher, until lost in the glories of eternal day.

In our last ascent we saw from the mountain of slaughter the glorious outcome of the eternal strife between truth and falsehood. By faith we beheld a world redeemed,—its resources, material and spiritual, restored

to the rightful ruler, the Prince of Peace. But to-day we take a forward look, and behold the realities lying beyond the things that appeal to sight, and we catch a glimpse of things unlawful for a man to utter. We penetrate deeper into the things of the spirit. The time will come when that which had a beginning will likewise come to an end. Then it is only the things of the eternal Spirit that will endure.

We are brought thus to the closing scenes of the Apocalypse. We have learned to interpret this book from the standpoint of spiritual reality, as distinguished from historic identification with interpretations of fact. It was so in the conflict with evil. It will be so in the consummation of the kingdom. The historical literalist is compelled to revise his calculations too often to insure stability of confidence. In the realm of spiritual interpretation we retain all, and yet lose nothing.

It is interesting to note the blending of the earthly and the heavenly in the day of consummation. Almost unitedly the church has seen in these latter chapters a vision of the glory world to which the soul is ushered at death. Nor can it be said that this conception has been inaccurate. But it is decidedly incomplete. For the apocalyptist had evidently in mind the establishment of a terrestrial order, in which the kingdom of God would be materialized on earth as it is in heaven. To ignore either of these phases of the revelation is to leave the picture incomplete. To posit all hope and improvement beyond the scene of earthly experience, leaves the soul hanging in the air, with little substantial hope to appeal to the sense-bound mind. But to confine the future to earthly scenes is to advance the frontier but a step, the while a wall obstructs the path, and the riddle of the universe remains unsolved. Christianity requires both time and eternity in which to come to its

completion. We object to the attempt that would force us to abandon one or the other idea.

Christianity is the faith with the forward look. Many of its adherents have the backward look, forgetful of what happened to one woman who ventured to look behind. Had God intended that His servants should emphasize the days that are gone, He would have put eyes in the back of the head. But the golden age of Christianity, as distinguished from all other faiths, is in the future. The best is yet to be. Not in aping the past, nor in dragging in its grinning corpse to sit at the feast of mirth, but in the hopeful, confident, forward look lies the true allegiance to the Christ. We mistake seriously when we look back to the Christ of Galilean days. The glorified Christ, and the Christ that is to be, are alone worthy the contemplation of his bride. And this is the message of the final chapters of the Apocalypse.

1. *A Tale of Two Cities*

Side by side two cities are studied in these last chapters. Both are symbolic, but with a historical foundation. Babylon the Great is contrasted with the New Jerusalem. What had the writer in mind when he wrote of Babylon? Was it the actual Babylon of ancient history? There are some who would interpret this reference literally. But Babylon had long since ceased to be an object of concern to the civilized world. Not even the Christian had any particular reason to contemplate the fate of historic Babylon at this time. It seems therefore that some mysterious significance must be attached to the use of this name.

Various attempts have been made to identify this city with Rome, the mistress of the world, and the enemy of the Church. But the evidence is not conclusive. Neither is it certain that Jerusalem was meant. She had

indeed been guilty of apostacy and crime that might well merit the condemnation imposed upon her in the text. The description might well apply. But, whatever was the actual city in the mind of the writer, it is probable, —nay, inconceivable that it should be otherwise,—that he thus sought to symbolize all government, inspired of hell, that opposed the right, and sought the blood of the advocates of truth. As such, both Rome and Jerusalem were but occasional and temporary illustrations of an organized, governmental opposition through which the forces of evil sought to wrest the government of the world from its rightful Lord.

Likewise, in the interpretation of the New Jerusalem, we must seek the truth in the realm of spirit which finds material form in the city known best to the exiled writer. Whatever had been the sins of the ancient Jerusalem, there is no doubt that it held a tender spot in the heart of John. Especially was this true if, as there is some reason to believe, the city had been sacked and destroyed by the hand of Rome previous to this writing. Much depends upon the actual date of the writing of Revelation. The idea underlying the description was rather religious than historical. Jerusalem stood for the place of the temple, the heart of the faith of Israel. The new Jerusalem was synonymous with a renewed faith, a religion revived, and the fulfillment of promise and hope. It is hardly to be supposed that the author intended to convey the serious impression that the description of this city, come down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband, was to be taken literally. Much harm has been done by the imposition of our hard and matter-of-fact thought upon the poetic mind of the writers of scripture.

Viewed from the standpoint of a regenerated social order, the description might equally be applied to the

idealized modern city. It is a new London, a new Paris, a new Berlin, a new Philadelphia, a new Boston, a new Chicago, come down from God out of heaven. When the conquering Christ takes the reins of government, our cities will approach the ideal depicted thus poetically before us.

But the main thought is contained in the contrast. Whatever its historic association, Babylon represented the world power that must succumb to the sovereignty of the Christ. Whatever the significance of its name, the New Jerusalem symbolized the established reign of the Christ. It is a tale of two cities, the one perishing because of iniquity, the other coming to rebirth through the adoption of the Christian program. As truly as there is a God in heaven, wrong shall not permanently prosper. The principles of right will prevail. Appearances to the contrary, sin is fighting a losing battle. When the smoke of conflict has cleared away, nothing hostile to the sovereignty of the holy and merciful Christ will be found. There is no room for evil of any shade or degree in the universe of God.

An examination of the characteristics of this government of God, as symbolized in the New Jerusalem, cannot fail to be of interest to the student of sociology. The writer was a prophet of the new, Christian social order. He did not make the mistake of working inward from without, as is the fault with so many would-be prophets of the modern day. He saw well that all centered in the inner conditions which made themselves felt in transformed outward manifestations. The New Jerusalem becomes a reality only to the extent that "the tabernacle of God is with men." But when that becomes a fact, then sorrow is removed because its causes are removed. Death recedes farther and farther before the beneficent reign of Christ, until, in that vague and in-

distinct borderland between time and eternity, death becomes extinct. Sorrow, sin, and pain are henceforth in the past tense, for the former things have passed away.

2. *A Glimpse Beyond the Veil*

From the beginning of time, death has presented a mystery to the mind of man. He lives in a world of sense, of sight and sound. At first reality seems essentially related to material things. It is only with time that the reality of the spiritual grows upon him. This does not ignore the unreasoning superstitions of primitive peoples. It but describes the evolution of the thinking soul. Death is one of the things which compels reflection. Does death close the book? Does it end all? "If a man die, shall he live again?" And various have been the attempted answers of philosophers and religionists during the centuries.

The Christian hope is vitally bound up with the future. It is not only a future for the race, growing brighter until the evils of life are dispensed with, but it is a future for the individual soul, that persists in spite of the closed eyes and the silent lips of physical death. This faith is fundamental, rooting in the desire of the soul to live, and finding its justification in the assurances of the Christ, and in the unthinkableness of the possibilities of the soul being left without realization. We take the hope of immortality for granted. And behind the door of death there lies a field of thought and experience which challenges the inquisitiveness of the soul, and holds in its confines the real treasure and explanation of life. If this should fail to "materialize" life has been robbed of its greatest incentive and richest meaning.

But what do we know of that future? What glimpses do we obtain from the mountain of promise? From the

beginning of the book of Revelation we have been in an atmosphere that is extra-terrestrial. The impact of the world of spirit upon the world of matter and experience is presupposed from the prophetic vision that revealed the glorified Christ down to the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven, reflecting the glory of God. The picture, often taken as a description of the home of the blessed, is but a suggestion, as an earthly counterpart of a heavenly ideal. But it is in this world of spirit that reality lies. Here we have been introduced into the presence of the throne of heaven. We have listened to the counsels of eternity. We have heard the angelic chorus singing the praises of the triune God. We have seen the souls of the martyrs clothed in white and shepherded by the Lamb himself. We have seen the four living creatures about the throne, and have heard the four and twenty elders at their devotions. What is to be made of it all? Is this pure imagination? It is the loftiest revelation. Granted that material forms cannot adequately express spiritual reality, they are sufficiently suggestive to inspire our confidence and increase our faith in the ultimate worth-whileness of the soul.

But the universe of God is one. Spiritual and material are not independent of each other. The spiritual interpenetrates the material, and we have the common chemical elements transformed into a rose, a beautiful form, a lovely face. The spirit intermingles with the material, and leaves its stamp upon it. So the living and the dead are alike subject to the oversight and providential care of God. Earth's phases are heaven directed. The counsels of heaven determine the destinies of men. Earth is indeed crammed with heaven. The veil that separates the living from the dead is thin as fleecy gauze, and utterly transparent from the other side. The throne of God but waits to be set up in the midst of redeemed

society, but that accomplished "there shall be no more death." And in the privilege of this blending of earth and heaven men shall even look upon the face of Deity, and bear upon their foreheads the mark of His name.

3. *Twelve Wide-Open Gates*

A glance at the outlines and confines of this holy city,—half earthly and half heavenly,—reveals some interesting features, and provokes some interesting inquiries. The walls surrounding it, together with the gates within those walls, are no less important than the structure of the city itself. Within and without there is a profusion of wealth, and an extravagance of those very things for which men so often sell their very souls. Geometrical precision marks the shape of the city. It lieth four-square, with the breadth as great as the length. This is but poetically symbolic of life as under the mastery of God. The glory of God is imparted to it, until there glows a light from within it, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Its pavements are made of material which men regard most precious,—such is the contempt of the King for mere material riches. Moreover, there is an unique feature in that city's life which at first thought is almost appalling. It is a city without a church! We have been accustomed to predicate that characteristic of the most abandoned place. To be churchless seemed to us to be godless. But, not so here. The city itself is a church. The presence of God and the Lamb render it a holy sanctuary, and its every feature an act of praise. Another feature, no less astounding, is the absence of sun and moon to give light. But that is explained by referring to the presence of all light, from which even the sun borrows his brightness. And needless to say, it is a city immune to every form of moral and physical ill.

But it is the walls of the city, and the gates thereof, that command our attention. Why there should be a wall we are not told,—unless that wall be the moral barrier that separates cleanness from uncleanness and allows only the pure in heart to see God. But it is a great wall, and a high one, with a length equal to that of the city,—fifteen hundred miles, which multiplied by four gives a circumference of six thousand miles to the city,—a figure that startles even the modern mind accustomed to big things. Of course we smile at the measurements, as though spiritual dimensions could be determined in terms of miles and furlongs. Yet, our expressions are consistently inconsistent, and we smile at the literalist who seeks to make them walk on all fours. And the height of the wall is about two hundred and fifty feet,—a height sufficient to seem insurmountable to the ancients, and quite amazing to moderns. If our appreciation of heights has varied, let us remind ourselves that this wall of separation is high enough that none can surmount it. Evil cannot enter the city. In the clime wherein this city lies, no aeronautics are known.

The structure of the walls is interesting to contemplate. They have twelve foundations. Deep, deep into the past go the substructure of the ideals and principles upon which separation is built. Human lives have not only been lived as living sacrifices, but have been surrendered in death to make permanent these moral ideals. The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written on these foundations. And in ascending glory, with all the beauty of the rainbow of promise, the stones that marked the breast-plate of the High Priest, with "holiness unto the Lord," become the materials of which the wall is built. Patriarchs and apostles combine to make

possible an ideal existence and government wherein the principles and will of the holy God are supreme.

But there are gates in these walls. Three on the east, and three on the north, and three on the south, and three on the west sides of the city. Regardless of origin, all races of men may find a way thither. The ideals of Buddha, and those of Confucius, may point to some of these gates. The eternal God has left no race without some knowledge of His will. We need be less concerned about there being other paths than our peculiar brand of orthodoxy, than about seeing that sufficient light is given to all wayfaring men to find a path,—the path,—that will lead to the realization of their spiritual ideals. And it must be that in regard to such light as men may have, the Master should again say: "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." "I am the way."

But there are two things to observe about these gates. The first is, they are guarded. An angel stands on duty at every gate. His is a task of challenging. None may enter upon whose brow is not written the name of the city of God, and who has not qualified as an overcomer. His name must be written in the Lamb's book of life. He may have belonged to the "other sheep, that were not of this fold," but if he has heard and obeyed his voice, through the spiritual affinity with his spirit and life, the Shepherd will know and own his sheep. The second thing to note is that the gates are never shut. While there is a wall of separation, there is a gate of invitation. And it would seem that nothing more fitting could be inscribed upon these gates of single, precious pearl, than the invitation:

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.
And let him that heareth say, Come.
And let him that is athirst come.
And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

And a glance within the gate discloses what water is meant, for from the throne of God and of the Lamb flows a river of water of life, bright as crystal. It is the river whose streams make glad the city of God. It is the stream with varying depths to suit every stage of spiritual development until one swims in it. The picture all told is very enticing. Would to God that its establishment on earth were more of a reality.

4. A Position From Which to Wait For the Coming One

The mountain of promise is a summit of expectancy. We have reserved the best of the expectation until now. Heaven is not only golden streets and pearly gates. Heaven is inseparable from Christ. Too often in our thinking of future bliss we have left out of account his presence who makes heaven. But all the celestial surroundings without him would quickly degenerate into the shambles of hell. Whereas, that presence has transformed a prison cell into an ante-chamber of heaven, and has made hearts jubilant in the sufferings of privation. And the best thing about the whole vision is the promise it contains of his coming. "Surely, I come quickly." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Let us have done with attempts to determine the manner and time of his coming. That lies in his own hands. Let us cease the bickering and quarreling that only serves to separate into hostile camps and sow discord among those who should be united in him. Let us dispense with the prefixes to the millennial hope. But with earnest hearts and loyal obedience let us remind ourselves continually: "Jesus is coming." Nineteen centuries have passed since the expectation was born,—but in the fullness of times he will come. Let us learn to see the signs of his nearer approach, nor spurn the indi-

cations of his presence. Each coming,—each fuller manifestation of his presence,—is cause for rejoicing. He will come into our lives as our capacity to receive him grows. He will come into our life and civilization to the extent that the way is made open. He will come in increasing glory as he has the opportunity to reveal himself in his truth and beneficence to mankind. His fullest coming is known to himself alone, and cannot be predicted with certainty. May it not indeed be an eternal advent, even as his generation from the Father was an eternal process? We miss much when we try to subject our hope to our understanding. The butterfly dies when impaled on the wall.

And here, on this last mountain of the Bible ranges, we tarry. It is a good place from which to watch for him. And as we watch, and look away into the dim distance, we sense a presence rare and glorious, and we look and behold he has just vanished from our sight, but we know it was indeed he. Some day we are going to know more about it. But now we rejoice in the glimpses we receive, and we obey the visions that are imparted, and there comes stealing into our souls a longing, a homesickness for heaven. We have a desire to depart and be with Christ. And the prospect of an eternal unfolding of the riches and glory of that presence makes eternal life worth striving for. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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